IDENTITIES

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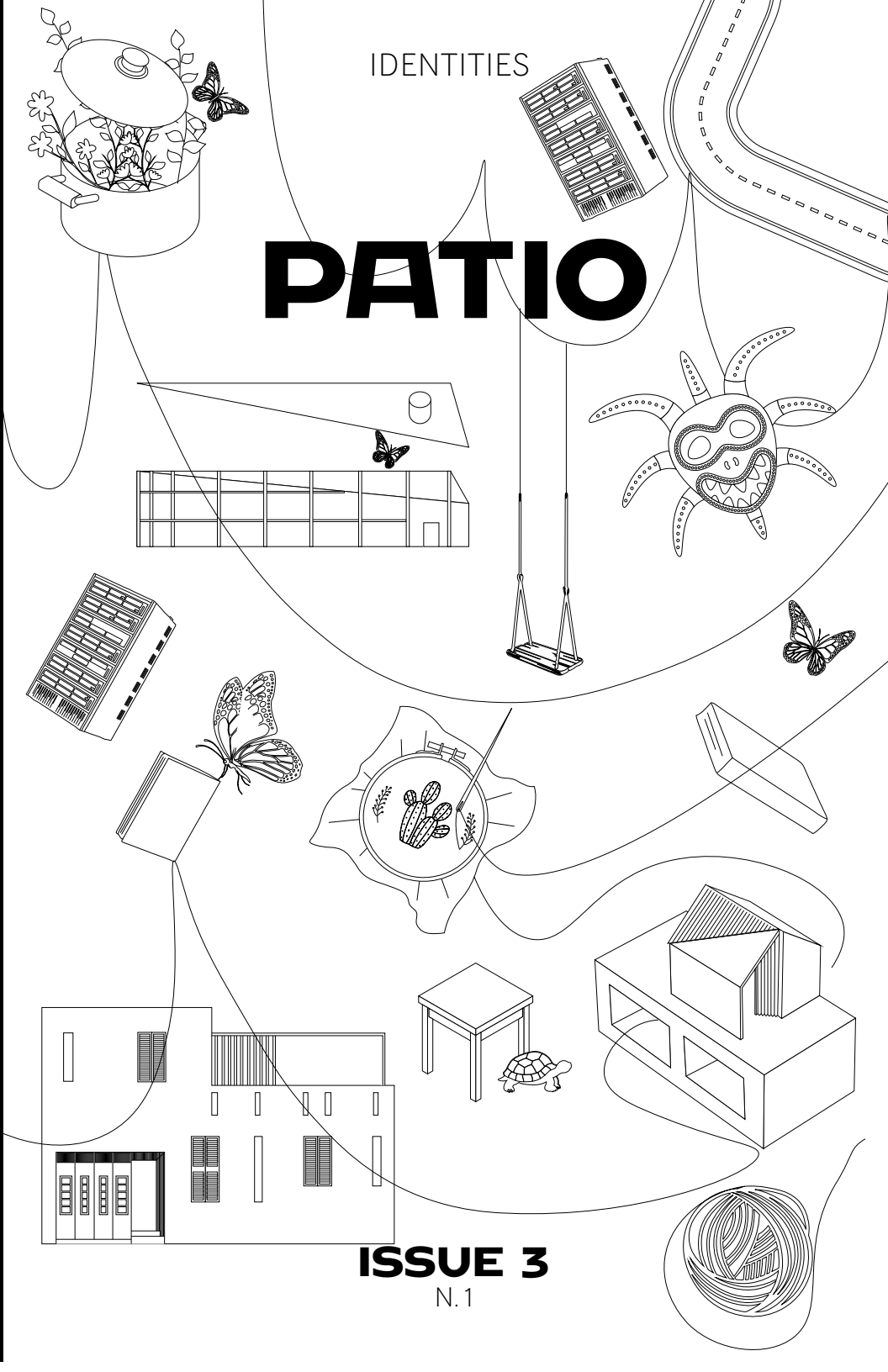

ISSUE 3

N.1

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Spring 2025

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Marcelo López-Dinardi
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MAAN + AGA Studio
Sebastian Delpino
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Special thanks to **Catalina Imizcoz**, who served as guest editor for this issue.

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Patio 1 - Alterity (2021)

Patio 2 - Real Talk (2022)

Enjoy!

Notes from the Threshold

by Patio Magazine Editorial Team

In recent months, New York has once again grappled with its role as a sanctuary city, navigating the fragile balance between openness and exclusion. The recent influx of migrants, shaped by geopolitical tensions and public discourse, has reignited a deeper question: What does it truly mean to belong in a city built on difference?

Here, identity is never singular. It emerges in thresholds and in-between spaces, resilient amid displacement, friction, and reinvention. From the bustling streets of Corona to the shifting terrain of East Harlem, Latin communities remind us daily that identity is formed not through geography, but through repeated acts of memory, mutual care, and quiet defiance[1]. These neighborhoods carry tension and vitality—celebrating heritage even as they adapt, survive, and resist erasure.

Amid this complexity, we witness gestures that refuse disappearance: tamales warming a sidewalk outside Sunday mass, Spanglish spoken with both pride and pause, murals repainted after being

1 Arlene Dávila, Latinx Art: Artists, Markets, and Politics (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020); Dolores Hayden, The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); María Elena Torre, "Participatory Action Research and Critical Race Theory: Fueling Spaces for Nos/otras to Research," The Urban Review 41, no. 1 (2009): 106–120.

whitewashed. These moments—fleeting yet rooted—carry histories that resist forgetting. They assert presence, even when the system renders it invisible[2].

These layered realities provoke urgent questions: How do we acknowledge the contributions of communities whose presence is often contested? Who gets to define which identities are celebrated—or erased? What does justice look like when belonging is precarious? As we look ahead, how might we imagine a city not simply tolerant of difference, but structurally composed around it? Can we build spaces that affirm rather than marginalize? Communities that speak, not merely survive? Can the city learn to listen—intently, and without condition?

By asking these questions, we return to the unfinished terrain of identity. Our collective future demands answers that are brave enough to welcome contradiction, clear enough to name power, and generous enough to make room—physically, politically, and emotionally—for stories to unfold with autonomy and dignity.

Identities doesn't offer a single answer to what identity is—nor does it pretend to. Instead, it brings together a constellation of fragments: uneven, situated, and deeply felt. The texts range from testimonial to analytical, from poetic to militant. This diversity is a strength, but also a challenge; contradictions aren't resolved but placed in tension. The enthusiastic response to our Open Call and the strength of the submissions led us to plan a second number, to be released in Fall 2025.

At times, the issue risks overusing tropes like resilience or border-crossing, yet it pushes further by making these themes material, architectural, and collective. Most crucially, Identities foregrounds the politics of voice—who speaks, from where, and with what stakes—reminding us that identity is not a label but a shifting position. In a moment when Latinx experiences are spotlighted yet oversimplified, this conversation feels more vital than ever.

2 Jordan Salama, "Twelve Migrants Sharing a Queens Apartment," The New Yorker, May 12, 2025, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2025/05/12/twelve-migrants-sharing-a-queens-apartment.

A TAPESTRY OF IDENTITY

Photography by Alexandra Xochil Gonzalez 2023,

Alexandra Gonzalez is from Santa Barbara, CA, and a UC Berkeley graduate in Legal Studies with a minor in Public Policy. Now in the Climate and Society Master's program at Columbia University, she focuses on public policy in urban cities, environmental justice, and the historic preservation of both built and natural environments. She believes people have a duty to honor and care for each other, and supports work toward more just and healthy places to live in.

Words by Alexandra Xochil Gonzalez

I grew up in Southern California, where the scent of carne asada[1] filled our neighborhood streets and the salty breeze rolled in from the Pacific. The city pulsed with life—bright murals of Frida Kahlo[2] and César Chávez[3] adorned alleyways, their gazes steady and unwavering against American flags. Taquerías sat nestled between old corner stores with sun-faded awnings, their neon signs flickering at dusk and stared directly back at the epicenter that is suburban Target parking lots. It was here, in my patchwork riviera, Spanish and English intertwined like dancers, moving

1 Grilled and sliced beef, typically marinated, and a popular dish in Mexican and Latin American cuisine, often served at gatherings.

2 Renowned Mexican painter known for her vivid self-portraits and works exploring identity, pain, and Mexican culture.

3 Mexican American labor leader and civil rights activist who co-founded the United Farm Workers union and fought for farmworkers' rights in the U.S.

fluidly through the air— blending seamlessly in the mouths of my classmates, neighbors, and family. **But on my lips, Spanish faltered, always a step behind.** These sounds, these scents, these moments, always came with a lingering question: '*Could I truly belong?*'

My father was born in Los Angeles, the eldest of nine children from a family rooted in Nayarit, Mexico.[4] At the age of ten he was the only one who spoke English fluently, the one who translated hospital forms and phone calls, who navigated a world that often refused to make space for his childhood because he had his parents and his siblings to think of. **He carried the weight of their hopes, the bridge between two worlds.**

I was raised immersed in Latin American traditions. My grandmother's hands, worn and strong, crushed herbs and brewed remedies passed down for generations, curing ailments in ways that felt almost mystical. I celebrated Día de los Muertos[5], built altars adorned with marigolds, and gathered with family for Nochebuena[6], the table overflowing with tamales[7] and champurrado[8]. Spanish was spoken around me constantly, though it never quite took root in my tongue the way it did for others in my family. It was beautiful. Vibrant color and music was the cornerstone of every tradition, and I feel so lucky to have the memories of these family parties. **And yet, I have felt like an outsider even among my Mexican family.**

The environment that shaped me—the palm trees swaying under the weight of the relentless California sun, the murals of revolutionaries and saints fiercely decorating city walls, the rhythmic mix of Spanglish echoing in crowded supermarket aisles, the warm sight of abuelitas patiently selling tamales from shopping carts outside church on sleepy Sunday mornings—taught me that identity is fluid, layered, and infinitely complex. **It is not simply the land we stand on, but**

4 Coastal state in western Mexico known for its rich indigenous culture, beautiful beaches, and vibrant traditions.

5 Traditional Mexican holiday celebrated on November 1st and 2nd to honor and remember deceased loved ones with altars, food, and offerings.

6 Celebration of Christmas Eve in many Latin American countries, often marked by a big family dinner and cultural traditions.

7 A traditional Mesoamerican dish made of masa (corn dough) filled with meats, cheeses, or other ingredients, wrapped in corn husks and steamed..

8 A warm, thick Mexican drink made with chocolate, masa (corn dough), milk, and spices, traditionally served during holidays and celebrations.

“Perhaps the roots of my identity are not bound to geography, but to the moments that have built me.”

also the inherited stories, longings, and fragments we carry within us. And still, the ache of being untethered, of belonging nowhere and everywhere, lingers.

I think about the streets of my childhood, lined with bougainvillea[9] spilling over chain-link fences, the cracked sidewalks where I played as a child, the neighborhood flowers smelled fresh and the air was heavy. These spaces—both built and natural—shaped my inner world, imprinting themselves on me in ways I did not fully understand as a child. **The wise ocean waves keeping rhythm, the towering high-rises of downtown LA in the distance, the business streets where mariachi bands[10] played for tourists—this was my world,** a world that was both wholly mine andni yet, at times, felt foreign.

Perhaps belonging is not something given, but something we carve out for ourselves. Perhaps the roots of my identity are not bound to geography, but to the moments that have built me—the laughter shared over bowls of pozole[11], the hands that have passed down knowledge through generations, **the ways in which I have learned to exist in both worlds, even when I feel like I belong in neither.**

---

9 Vibrant, flowering plant common in warm climates, known for its colorful paper-like petals and ornamental use in Latin American gardens.

10 Traditional Mexican musical groups known for their lively performances featuring violins, trumpets, guitars, and singers in festive charro outfits.

11 Traditional Mexican soup or stew made with hominy and meat (usually pork), seasoned with garlic and chili, and topped with fresh garnishes.

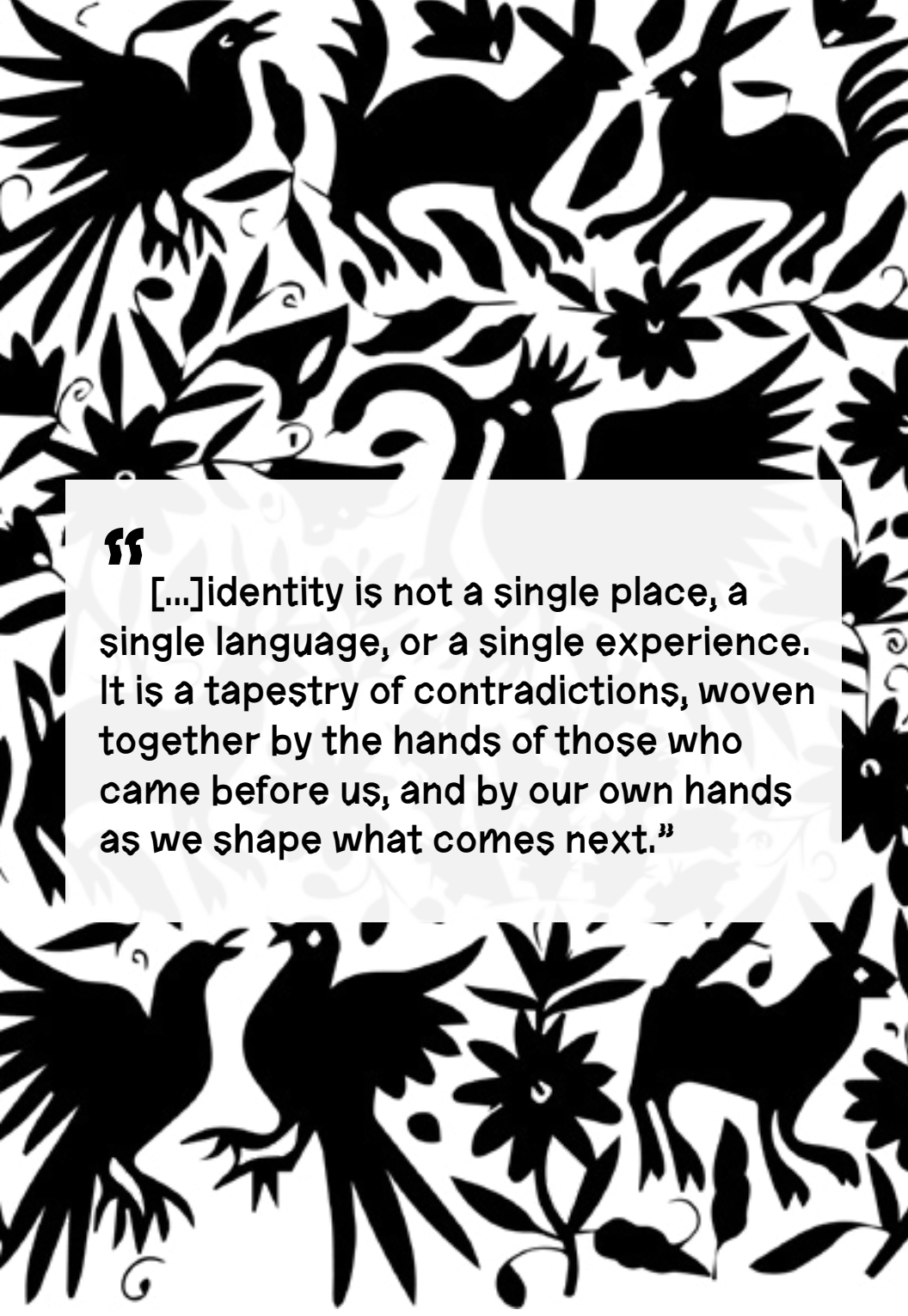
I do not have all the answers. There are days when the weight of my divided identity feels too heavy, when the longing for rootedness consumes me. I have never set foot in Mexico. How do you claim a connection to a place you've never been? This question has haunted me for as long as I can remember. I envy the certainty with which others hold their heritage. I see my cousins, who visit Mexico often, who slip effortlessly between cultures, who do not seem to question their place. I watch the way my American peers embrace their roots with ease, the way they revel in their ancestry without the burden of proving it. **And yet, for me, my identity feels like something I must constantly defend,** as if I am waiting for someone to grant me permission to belong to a club that I don't even know exists.

It's difficult to truly understand how we see ourselves because we are constantly shaped by the people we meet and the experiences we live through each day. We like to believe we have control over how we express ourselves—and to some extent, we do—but we cannot control how others perceive us. They interpret what we put into the world, but their perception is beyond our influence, shaped by their own perspectives and biases. **This can be especially challenging for those of us who exist within blurred boundaries of identity,** never fully fitting into one space or another.

I feel I exist in this in-between, straddling the lines of two identities, never quite feeling entitled or comfortable to claim either part. But there is power in questioning, in searching, in creating space for those of us who live within these blurred boundaries. Because identity is not a single place, a single language, or a single experience. It is a tapestry of contradictions, woven together by the hands of those who came before us, and by our own hands as we shape what comes next.

Y quizá, solo quizá, eso sea suficiente…

(And maybe, just maybe, that's enough…)

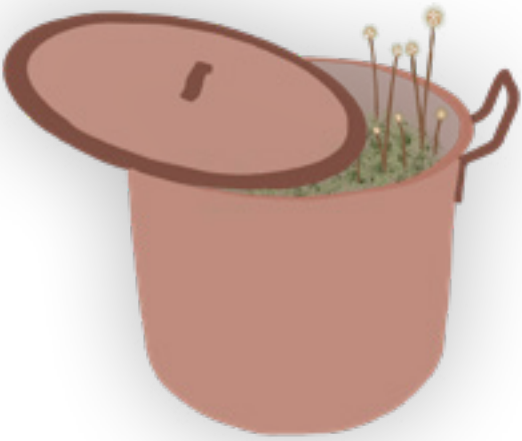


“[...]identity is not a single place, a single language, or a single experience. It is a tapestry of contradictions, woven together by the hands of those who came before us, and by our own hands as we shape what comes next.”

Illustrated by Pablo Useche, 2025

Echar pa' lante

Words by Inés Yupanqui



Inés Yupanqui is a licensed architect based in New York, where she leads A Space Unfolds Architecture and teaches at NJIT. With a background in architectural and interior design, her work spans residential, commercial, and cultural spaces. She believes design can build community and meaning, and is committed to creating spaces that are sustainable, equitable, and grounded in the lives of those who inhabit them.

Growing up in Latin America, I heard a lot of idioms in my family that have been passed from generation to generation. "Guardar pan pa' Mayo" in moments of scarcity when people would have to save goods for the unforeseen future, "Convertir las noches en días" when people could barely rest because they had to provide food to their families, and "Echar Pa'lante" when people motivate one another to push forward and keep going. All these idioms come from our common history and the social and economic reality.

My own experience as a Latin-American focuses on Colombia and Peru -I was born in Colombia to a Peruvian family. Through the lenses of my grandparents' and parents' generations, I quickly learned about the different challenges that our people have faced for decades and how resilience, tenacity, and solidarity have kept us going.

The Latin American identity is deeply shaped by how we, as a society, have faced systemic adversity. In the 1980s, Colombia and Peru were marked by profound social and economic crises driven by state neglect, social inequality, violence, and food insecurity. Widespread poverty and the lack of government support left entire

communities without access to essential services, while economic instability made survival a daily struggle. Violent armed conflict was at its peak in both countries. The Sendero Luminoso in Peru and the FARC[1] in Colombia engaged in violent confrontations with the government that further exacerbated social instability and displacement. Widespread poverty driven by hyperinflation and disrupted rural networks led to increased dependence on informal structures. Colombians and Peruvians, surrounded by these multiple crises, did not stay still. **Communities became the primary support network; they self-organized and launched community-driven initiatives to provide mutual aid— "La unión hace la fuerza."**

There are several examples of these grassroots initiatives across Latin America that originated to address their most pressing

1 Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) were Maoist and Marxist guerrilla groups, respectively, that waged violent insurgencies against the state, causing widespread social and territorial disruption across Peru and Colombia.

Los Comedores Populares, Photo by Ronald Ancajima.

Urban rooftop garden in Comuna 13, Medellín. Photo by Luis Eduardo Noriega Arboleda / EFE.

"These kitchens became symbols of resourcefulness and solidarity, demonstrating how collective action could provide stability even in the most difficult circumstances."

needs. One of the most widespread efforts in Peru was the 'Ollas Comunes', or communal kitchens, which emerged as a response to severe food insecurity. As economic instability and violence disrupted livelihoods, families struggled to afford basic necessities. In the absence of state support, communities—particularly women—organized to pool their resources, share cooking responsibilities, and ensure that no one went hungry. These kitchens became symbols of resourcefulness and solidarity, demonstrating how collective action could provide stability even in the most difficult circumstances.

In Colombia, the Huertas Urbanas, or urban agriculture, were born out of the mass displacement of rural peasants due to armed conflict or to look for better opportunities. As thousands of families migrated to the cities seeking safety, urban populations surged, stretching already scarce resources and worsening poverty. **Displaced communities transformed urban spaces into agricultural gardens** that not only provided food but also fulfilled the need to find a connection with the new territory they inhabited and to foster a sense of identity and self-sufficiency.

Another initiative that had a profound impact on Colombian communities was the Hogares de Solidaridad, which addressed the lack of childcare for working parents. As economic hardship forced parents to work long hours, many had no safe place to leave their children. In response, women known as Madres Solidarias volunteered to care for small groups of children in their homes, providing a nurturing

Ollas Comunes by Nancy Arellano Pretell

“The Latin-American Barrios Populares maximize the use of the space in their houses to accommodate initiatives [...] or to bring additional income to their households.”

environment where kids could eat, learn, and play until their parents finished work. **I had the opportunity to participate in this program which was led by my high school.** Students volunteered every Friday of the academic year to support the Madres Solidarias, feed children of various ages and assist with extracurricular activities. This experience echoed all the learnings passed along to me by my grandparents and parents and showed me how Latin Americans bridge critical gaps and empower themselves with solidarity.

These informal programs and initiatives have raised important questions. One is the need to transform what we understand as a house and its basic spaces such as living rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms, etc. The Latin-American Barrios Populares or informal settlements maximize the use of the space in their houses to accommodate initiatives like the ones mentioned above or to bring additional income to their households. Another question is the need of public entities or governments to regulate and formalize these programs, especially when they are sometimes used as political tools to secure votes during elections. It has been seen how some politicians have treated basic needs as a joke — I still remember when Donald Trump threw paper towels in Puerto Rico, making a spectacle out of a humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

We, as Latin Americans, have long demonstrated an incredible sense of community, resourcefulness, and resilience. Whether it is fair that we have found our own means to fight social inequality remains a question. What is not a question is how we have pushed forward through the failing systems in pursuit of individual and collective well-being. This is what makes us who we are, we put the best face to hardship and tell each other “Al mal tiempo, buena cara.”

Architecture as Active Reflection

"Cartographies of the Forest" Article for the 2021 Venice Biennial's book Expansions, edited by Hashim Sarkis and Ala Tannir.

Interview by Adriana Castro

Maria Alejandra Linares is a researcher and writer from Lima, currently based between D.C. and New York. Her work moves through drawing, writing, and critical inquiry, tracing landscapes shaped by extraction, memory, and power. Engagement with Peru serves as a method for tracing ruptures and holding space for complexity. For her, academia offers a space for care, critique, and collective thinking—where knowledge resists simplification and opens paths for others.

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us. To begin, how does your Latin American identity shape the way you approach your practice? For instance, in your pedagogical work, are there particular topics or conversations you bring to the table that are influenced by your roots or experiences from the region?

First of all, I think that it's difficult to speak of a "Latin American identity" since it's not a monolith—it's constantly shaped by intersections of race, class, and gender, which determine access to spaces and resources. So, while my practice is shaped by my background, it's not necessarily a representative or exemplary Latin American experience. I think it's unique to my own life experience, in which being from Latin America informs my themes, approach and pedagogy.

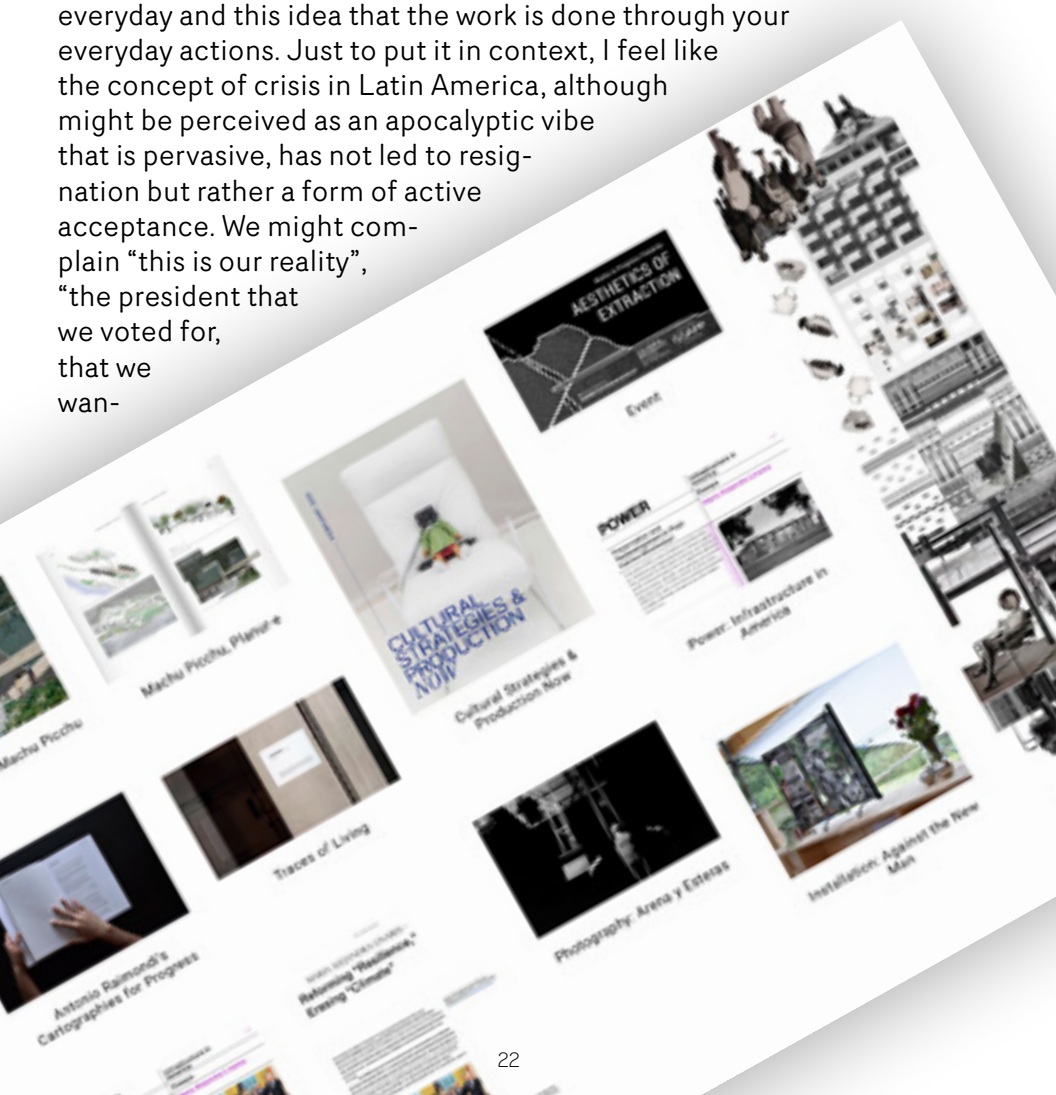
In terms of themes, I use my work to make sense of my reality. My research and practice over the past few years have revolved around that. At first, it was about confronting and unpacking my own background and privilege. Then, I began addressing themes around extractive economies, socio-political projects in the region, and Indigenous forms of knowledge, which are not themes exclusive to Peru but which intersect issues in other regions of the Global South and Latin America.

Also, in recent years, I have decided that even though I operate outside of Peru, I want my research and practice to be linked to Peru, kind

of working across different territories. That's in terms of the themes that I take on.

Regarding my approach, I think one element that resonates with the Latin American experience is operating within the idea of scarcity. In the sense of always finding a way to make things happen, working with little resources, or trying to make the system work in your favor—manipulating it and not necessarily accepting the rules or the structure or the status quo as it is.

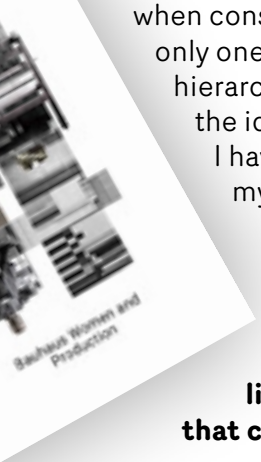
And the other thing is in relation to the resistance in the everyday and this idea that the work is done through your everyday actions. Just to put it in context, I feel like the concept of crisis in Latin America, although might be perceived as an apocalyptic vibe that is pervasive, has not led to resignation but rather a form of active acceptance. We might complain "this is our reality", "the president that we voted for, that we wan-



“It’s not that resignation of: ‘Oh well, this is how it’s going to be,’ but rather like: ‘OK. This is not going to define my future either.’”

ted, didn’t get elected” but then we also say “OK. Life goes on, and we need to make this work,” so we just carry on. And, that’s something that really contrasted with my experience in the US, particularly coming right after Trump’s election in the first term, and now with his second win. There is this doomsday attitude in terms of people in fear, asking “How is this even possible?” “What are we going to do now?” etc. And for me, it’s like: Well you fight, you resist. The struggle and the work takes place everyday. It’s not just done through elections every four years, or through our political system and institutions.

Then finally in terms of my pedagogy, I think it’s a response to the academic experience I had while in Latin America. So, I try to contest the traditional way that the discipline is perceived and taught, especially when considering my experience in Peru. This idea that there’s only one way to be an architect, and that the discipline is still very hierarchical and patriarchal. The culture of self-sacrifice and the idea of the single creative genius are some things that I have been trying to address through my practice and my pedagogical approach.



Thank you. It all sounds really interesting—especially the part about how, in Latin America, we become accustomed to certain issues and learn to live with them, even when we shouldn’t. It’s a reality that cuts across the entire region.

Yes, but I think it’s a productive acceptance. It’s not acceptance in terms of being conformed with the situation, it’s acceptance in the sense of recognizing that you have agency in shaping your own reality.

So it's different, it's not that resignation of: "Oh well, this is how it's going to be," but rather like: "OK. This is not going to define my future either."

Do you see your decision to focus on teaching and research—rather than practicing architecture in the conventional sense—as influenced by your Latin American identity or context? Were there specific political, cultural, or disciplinary conditions—either from the region or from your personal experience—that led you to see academia as a more meaningful or critical space for engagement?

It's shaped by my experience in the sense of what it is like to be an immigrant operating in the US, and not being fully educated in the US. So, like, not having a license, not having a cultural network from the beginning, not having a professional network from the beginning. I think it was mostly shaped by that context, in terms of finding a way to operate in the US within my situational limitations.

It's also informed by the desire to have the freedom to shape my own practice. And I think that is related to my refusal of the idea of architecture as just one single way of being or practicing that now is being dismantled.

I believe this is a later phenomenon in Latin America. I think it's more clear outside. But yes, thinking of the many ways that I wanted to practice and tend to my interests beyond just doing professional practice as a conventional designer in a firm or independently. Also, because working independently is limited to those with resources, right? Thinking of architecture, particularly in the way it has been historically framed in our countries, is very tied to the idea of class and having the resources to actually become an architect.

Another aspect would be having the freedom to tackle the themes that I'm interested in, and that are not necessarily easy to tackle from a professional standpoint. Being able to talk about landscapes of extraction,decolonization, and visual representation. Those are themes that I really want to be able to approach in my own particular ways. And that relates to the fact that I think of architecture not just as a technological practice but also as knowledge production.

Participating in the "History and Progress" panel at The Seventh Annual Symposium of Latin American Art titled "Making Space, Making Place: Marking the Americas"

And that also relates to the fact that while I was in Peru, academia was not considered a first choice, even though it has a long history, it's not like you study to become a professor.

I think that's really interesting, and I believe this idea is shaped by a culture of crisis. In the face of uncertainty, the response is often to prioritize productivity and economic gain. As a result, the focus shifts to institutionalized forms of professional practice that can deliver those outcomes: engineering, business, management, law, economics, and so on. Meanwhile, architecture is considered to belong to the arts. Therefore, studying architecture is indulging in something that is not urgent or necessary. I think that's really ironic, because here, you would think: "oh, being a professor, how conventional!"–you are following a traditional path.

But in my case, I am foregrounding this idea that architecture is a valuable form of knowledge production and that we, as architects, are able to contribute to knowledge and issues and questions without necessarily building, you know?

Yes, many of the people I know tend to practice professionally during their early years, and later engage in teaching—often in parallel with their own work, rather than being fully dedicated to academia. Do you feel that your experience as a Latin American woman in academic spaces has shaped the way you relate to students, mentors, or ins-

titutional structures? Are there tensions, possibilities, or vulnerabilities that emerge from occupying that position?

That's a difficult question, I have to say I've been lucky to work with groups that are very diverse, that are in many cases not hierarchical, and that invite collaboration. So that's something that I really appreciate. I think that one of the difficulties or tensions or frictions that have come up is around dismantling the preconceptions that exist about Latin America, as it has been understood as a monolithic category exclusively related to race. So Hispanic/Latino is just another box in relation to White, Black, right? I constantly try to explain that well Latino is not a race, and being Latino is very different for everyone. The realities are very different if you are coming from a high class or a lower class or if you show more indigenous features or if you come from rural areas or if you come from urban spaces. How has your background been shaped by the whiteness in your family?

I think I'm always trying to dismantle preconceptions or the myth of mestizaje. For example, when questions of diversity come up, there's the idea that bringing X number of Latinos is bringing diversity when, in reality, diversity is not brought by that. It's brought by the other intersections of race, gender, social class, etc.

"I'm always trying to dismantle preconceptions or the myth of mestizaje."

Futuros Acuosos / Watery Futures, reimagining our existence through and with water.

I also think my presence in institutions—although sometimes I have questioned my presence as a diversity hire—is about building solidarities and alliances within that position. In the sense of "Well, I'm able to bring other voices into the classroom, right?" Through coordinating reviews, doing events, inviting people, and suggesting people.
I've been really happy about trying to build these alliances and solidarities and networks of other young emerging scholars from Latin America and give them a space, or offer to create a space for them in these institutions.

I think that's how I reconcile my identity and my presence in these institutions.Because I also understand how these institutions have operated in terms of the systems of power and dynamics of power, particularly with women and brown and black people.

With that in mind, I try to assume a more active role and find forms where I can contribute within the system, in a way.

That sounds really helpful, especially for the Latin American region, where that kind of support is much needed.

Totally, and I have encountered this while doing research. It's interesting to compare doing research outside of Peru and doing research in Peru. So, I've had to build these networks in order to support my work, but I have also tried to maintain relationships of reciprocity.
So not always extractive relationships, and it's really interesting, because I think that unfortunately one thing that threatens the collectivity of our region is this persistence of individualism and like: "oh, if I produce any type of research piece, it's my intellectual property and I shouldn't share it." There's this sort of jealousy, of protecting what is yours. And so people don't want to share, and I found that really strange because I operate from the other side. So it's really interesting, and I'm also trying to be more reflective and mindful.
So, practice is a constant self-reflection of how to operate and build better networks.

Yes, for sure. There are many concepts, ideas, and conversations about Latin American topics that need to be

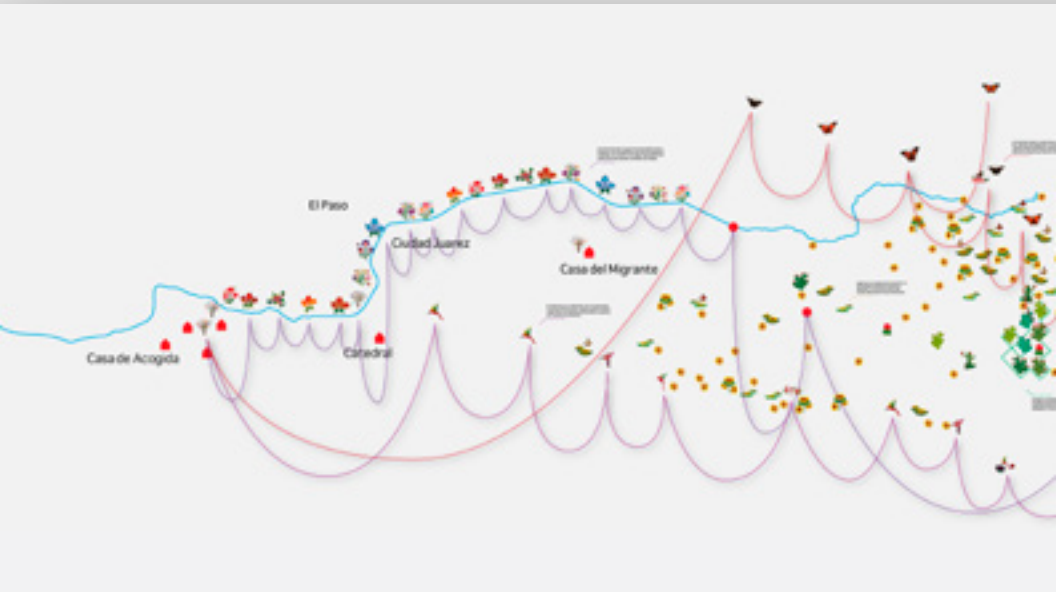
addressed in academia, but currently aren't being explored as much as they should be.

Yes, particularly if we think of American academia as something that is not accessible to everyone, right? Because of its cost. It's already prohibited for a great number of people. So, what does it mean for you to be inside that space? And again, it has to do with recognizing my privilege and understanding how to operate from there. Instead of me appropriating other voices or being the one that is amplifying those voices, could I just make the space for those voices to talk in their own autonomy?

"Instead of me appropriating other voices or being the one that is amplifying those voices, could I just make the space for those voices to talk in their own autonomy?

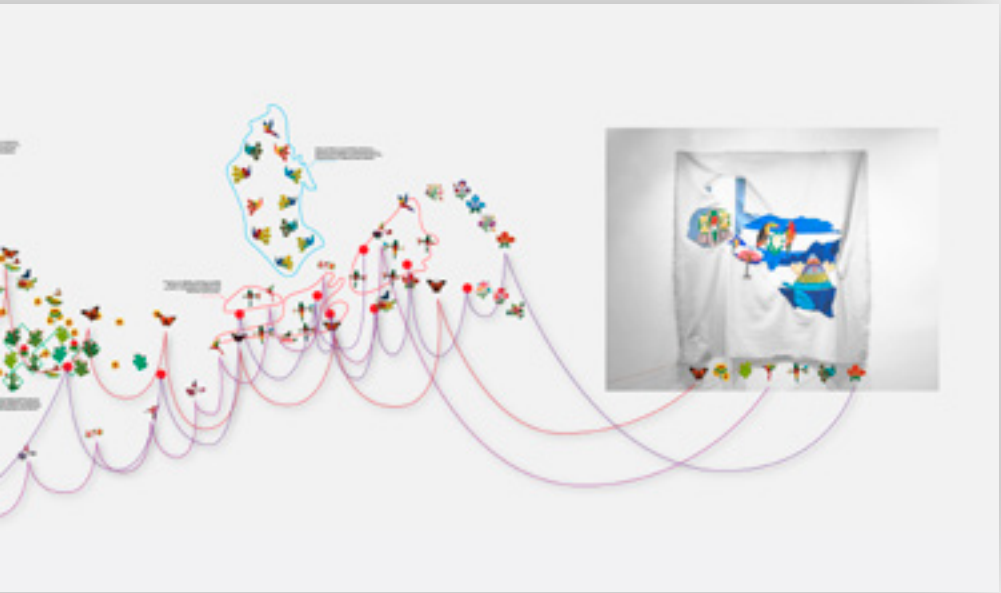
BORDÆR

Cartographies and Narratives of Migration



Gabriel Vergara is an architect and urban designer based between New York and Santiago. A graduate and adjunct at Columbia GSAPP, he explores how design can foster justice, resilience, and cultural memory. He has collaborated with organizations across the Americas—from community justice initiatives in NYC to cultural institutions in Mexico and Chile. Through Susuka and Supersudaca, his work spans teaching, publishing, and design practice. He believes in architecture as a collective tool to navigate ecological and urban transformation.

Words by Gabriel Vergara



Mural Map of Migration, 2023

Collective Embroidery piece , 2023

November 2022 to February 2023 – William Bullock Prize 2020

Awarded by the USC Fisher Museum of Art, the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (UNAM), and Palabra de Clio, in collaboration with Junt@as Vamos, Museo de Arte de Ciudad Juárez (MACJ), and Grupo Enfoque A.C.

In October 2018, Central American migrants organized the first massive caravan that attracted widespread media attention. Since then, approximately 30 caravans have carried entire families toward the border between the United States and Mexico. Border cities on the Mexican side, such as Ciudad Juárez, have deeply felt the impact of the mass arrival of people seeking asylum and safety. Many of them were returned by the U.S. government to their country of transit and forced to wait for their asylum application in Mexico. **The volume of migration, combined with a hasty patchwork of federal, state, and binational policies, has resulted in an overnight crisis**, as Ciudad Juárez's infrastructure, public facilities, and social services quickly became overwhelmed and unable to respond effectively to growing needs.

In response to the magnitude of the crisis, civil society organizations were the first to act. Aid groups, often relying on churches and temporary shelter centers, created and continue to foster spaces of support, protection, and refuge for migrants. After visiting the U.S.-Mexico border in 2019 and conducting a research project, we had the opportunity to meet one of these remarkable organizations: Junt@s Vamos, a grassroots solidarity and advocacy group originally formed and coordinated by women with cancer, and led by the inspiring Cristina Coronado. **Since its founding in 2015, the group has expanded its mission to work with other vulnerable populations,** such as asylum

Embroidery Workshops, 2023

Collective work, 2023

seekers and, primarily, migrant women affected by increasingly strict and punitive border regulations.

Unlike government agencies that assist migrants, Junt@s Vamos uses the power of accompaniment, advocates for the health and rights of these groups, and brings together people from both sides of the border for community action in healing and transforming border communities. **One example of their work is the embroidery project,** which, beyond generating economic income, provides women with an emotional support space while they wait for their asylum applications.

"The Bordær: Cartographies and Narratives of Migration" project emerged as an opportunity to make visible the work developed by this group of asylum seekers impacted by the "Return to Mexico Program" or "Migrant Protection Protocol" (MPP). The project is envisioned as a multidisciplinary creative laboratory, developed in close collaboration with the Museo de Arte de Ciudad Juárez and professionals from the disciplines of urban design, art, pedagogy, and anthropology.

We envisioned Bordær as a collective art project that provides participants with a space to narrate, draw, and expand on their experiences through embroidery. **We explored embroidery as a narrative tool to trace the spatial and territorial perspectives of the migrant experience,** as well as the personal journeys of those currently in the shelter. These collective embroidery pieces are complemented by photographs, paintings, and maps. While acknowledging that forced migration violates people's rights, security, and dignity, this exhibition highlights another truth: behind this phenomenon are individuals of remarkable strength and resilience. **In this case, women who, through solidarity and collective action, create physical and**

La mariposa monarca viaja más de 5 mil kilómetros
en su proceso de migración sur norte y norte-sur. El
viaje les puede tomar hasta 4 generaciones para
alcanzar sus destinos en México y Norteamérica.

Embroidery Workshops, 2023

Embroidery Workshops, 2023

emotional spaces of care, support, protection, and shared dignity.

Through the project and by listening to the testimonies of the participants, we can confirm that women have been pushed to migrate due to a series of factors, including economic hardship, threats to their lives, and violence in their home countries. **Behind these reasons lie phenomena related to systemic issues such as politics, corruption,** and climate change, or as Cristina Coronado shared with us the first time we interviewed her:

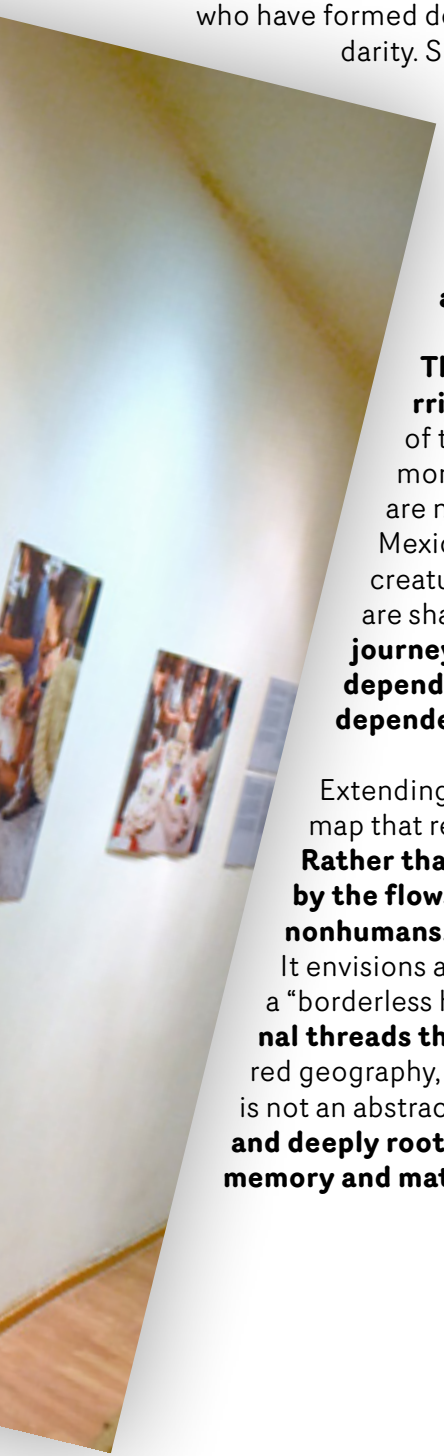
It is a political and economic system worldwide that does not work. Everything else stems from a criminal, neoliberal, and rotten economic systems, forcing people to have to flee their towns.

In response to these conditions, we organized the work developed for the exhibition into a series of pieces, each offering a different entry point into the lived experience of migration, care, and resistance.

Drawing on the tradition of Andean quipus—threaded cords used to record history—and Mexica codices that blended signs and imagery, **the embroidered works trace the beginnings and ongoing journey of Casa de Acogida.** Each piece corresponds to a person who has passed through this ever-changing community. Some stay, others move on, but all leave behind a unique thread in the collective fabric. **Across the collection, one can observe the evolution of technique and material,** revealing how time and experience are inscribed not just in narrative, but in craft itself.

One of the central threads in the project speaks to the convergence of two groups: the women of the Corpus Christi parish and the migrant women

Photographs depicting the daily life of women and children at Casa de Acogida. 2023



who have formed deep bonds through shared labor and solidarity. Since 2018, Junt@as Vamos has coordinated Proyecto de Bordado, a collaborative embroidery initiative where women design and craft bags decorated with motifs of flora and fauna. **These bags offer both economic support and emotional grounding—tools for sustenance and symbols of belonging.**

The choice of embroidered motifs carries ecological and political weight. Many of the plants and animals chosen—such as monarch butterflies and hummingbirds—are native species from Central America and Mexico, known for their migratory cycles. These creatures, like the women who stitch them, are shaped by movement across borders. **Their journeys reflect a broader ecology in which life depends on circulation, adaptation, and interdependence.**

Extending this logic, we conceptualized a stitched map that resists fixed territorial boundaries. **Rather than national divisions, the map is defined by the flows between land and water, humans and nonhumans, movement and rest.** It envisions a territory where species and people share a "borderless home," **woven together through relational threads that defy imposed separations.** In this shared geography, embroidered stories affirm that resilience is not an abstract quality—**it is ecological, collaborative, and deeply rooted in both memory and material.**

From Infrastructure to Identity

Words by Sebastian Delpino

Sebastián Delpino is an architect and educator based in Santiago, Chile. He explores the role of design in shaping public space, rural landscapes, and urban development. A graduate of UDP and Columbia GSAPP, his work bridges teaching, independent practice, and public commissions—from scenic viewpoints in Patagonia to strategic master plans. Through S/D Arquitectos Asociados and his role at UDP, he is committed to architecture as both a tool for inquiry and a platform for shared transformation.

CH-7 road, Austral Highway (2016). © Sebastián Delpino Donoso

Austral Highway has not only been fundamental for the economic development of the Aysén Region in Chile but also for the transformation of its landscape, by means of interventions associated with the industrial production of raw materials and its revaluation as national heritage. **To understand this piece of road infrastructure and approach it as a system capable of configuring a region, it is necessary to know its history, its context,** and its bases for the development of an action plan to promote tourism, and benefit those who inhabit this region.

The road known today as Austral Highway (Road CH-7), and other roads that are connected to it, have contributed to the economic development of the Aysén region in Chile for more than a century. Its first section was built in 1903 along the Simpson River to transport raw materials between Estancia Coyhaique, owned by the Sociedad Industrial de Aysén (SIA) and Puerto Aysén, where wool exported to Europe was shipped. **This activity was the trigger for its construction, initiating a land connection process based on the need for export.** The European population of the region settled there thanks to the "Law of repatriation of the resident settlers in the Republic of Argentina" enacted in 1896. This law contemplated the reincorporation

of the settlers who had left their countries in search of development opportunities. Thus, in order to effectively occupy inhospitable areas, **lands were offered to those open to such an opportunity to encourage repatriation of remote places such as Aysén,** which at that time was called 'the promised land'. In other words, lands were given for economic development purposes, with which the state achieved the settlement of extreme territories as a way of "building the homeland" and expanding and controlling national territory.[1]

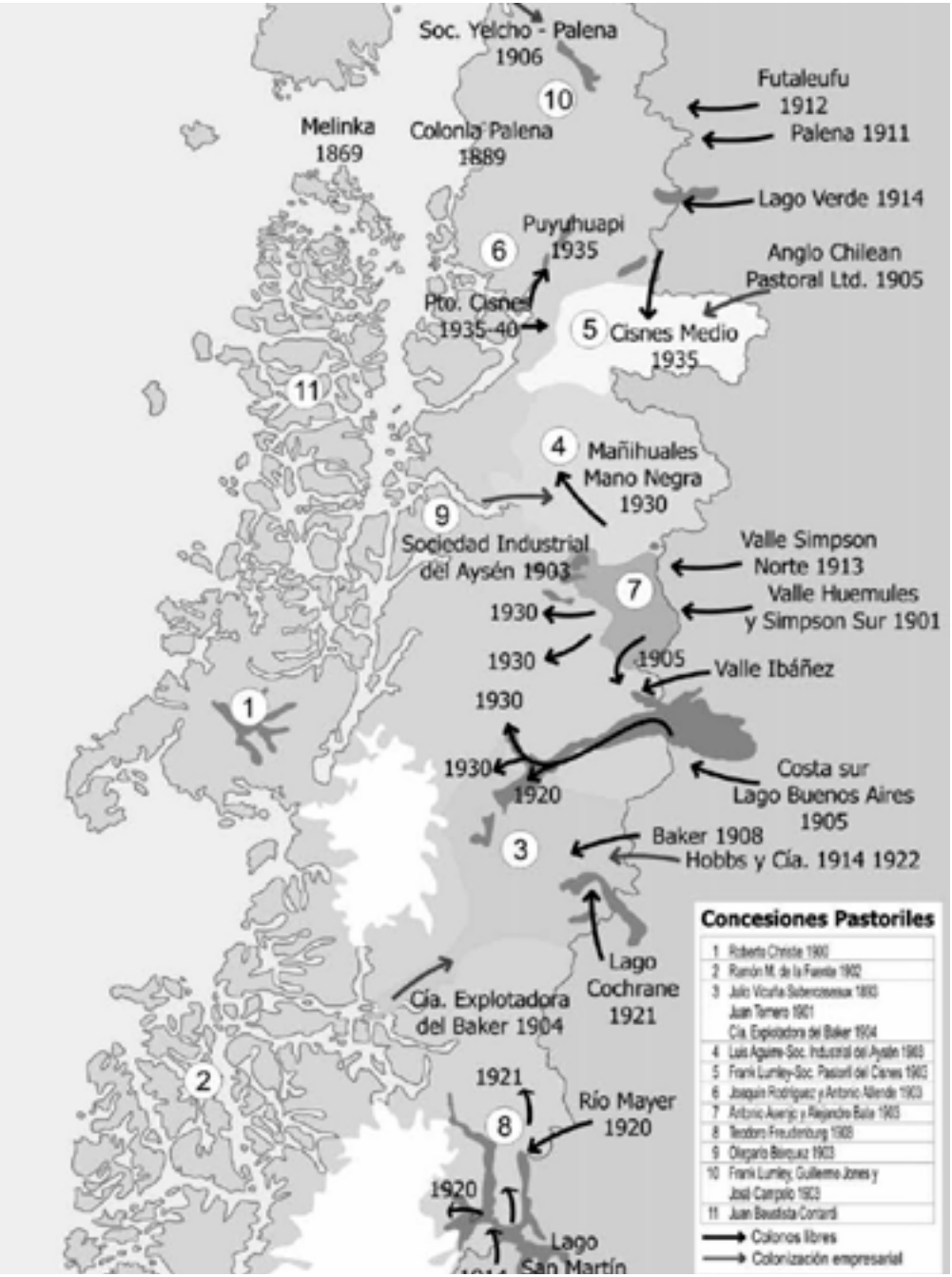
The estancias were defined as the territorial unit of a socioeconomic system, being the fundamental drive for boosting regional productive activity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the most important area in production capacity was Estancia Coyhaique, which promoted the construction of the first section of the Austral highway (as described above). **Its public use was implemented in 1906, as explained by historian Mateo Martinic:**

> *This first expression of the future territorial road infrastructure was declared of public use by the Supreme Government on February 5, 1906, when it was known that the SIA had prevented people from the Sociedad Ganadera de los Tres Valles from using it.*[2]

Thus, the development of the Austral highway began its expansion in function of the need to transport raw materials for exportation and in order to strengthen the connectivity of the region at the same time. **The first layout of the road was designed departing from a port located at the current Puerto Aysén,** the city that became the regional capital around 1920. The productive activity resulted in the building of a railway between Coyhaique and Aysén for industrial transportation.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the construction process of this infrastructure was undertaken without regulation regarding its effects on the territory, which resulted, among other

1 Extracted from El Mercurio de Valparaiso in 1885. In Martinic, Mateo. De la Trapananda al Aysén (Santiago: Pehuén Editores, 2005), 163.
2 Ibid., 134.



Colonizing Occupation 1900 – 1940. Source: "De la Trapananda al Aysen", 2014, Mateo Martinic. p.401

CH-7 road, Austral Highway (2016). © Sebastián Delpino Donoso

things, in the indiscriminate burning of native forests for their transformation into productive estancias. **Forest burning was conducted to provide open fields for livestock, agriculture, and industry development,** the fundamental economic engine of the region at the time. The environmental consequences – then unsuspected – were that many of these manmade fires expanded uncontrollably for months, causing thousands of hectares of native forests to disappear – the Simpson River Valley being one of its most conspicuous examples. In 1952, the General Administration of Aysén was generated in order to correct the forest situation. It recognized the defects of Laws No.4.855 and 6.035 concerning settlements, admitting that they failed to regulate the land burning for productive purposes – clearing maneuvers that had already taken an appalling character according to the local records of the time.

Deeper into the second half of the twentieth century, the State began to contribute resources to the expansion of the highway to promote livestock and agricultural industries, with the understanding that the Austral highway would have the capacity to consolidate and promote the economic development of the region. **During the presidency of Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-70), the Austral highway was understood as a piece of political-economic infrastructure** and considered a way of building the homeland: by settling and colonizing an extreme region.

In the course of the government of Salvador Allende (1970-73), unsuccessful efforts were taken to consolidate the area into a regional system. Later, during the dictatorship and military regime of Augusto Pinochet (1973-90), the highway expansion was continued as a way of controlling the territory. **It was in this period that the Ministry of Public Works (MOP) intended to consolidate the highway**

into a regional system but not simply as a sum of sections connecting different populated centers or estancias, as it was hitherto considered. The works to execute this ambitious plan are still ongoing today under the direction of the MOP, reaching more than 115 years of continuous construction, adaptation, and maintenance efforts.

So far, the materializing process of the road as an infrastructure has been approached, and its impact on the landscape has been outlined as a work capable of re-signifying the territory from economic, social, and ecological perspectives. **And it is the road's capacity to raise a new landscape that conveys meaning** in the words of the US Army Intelligence Officer, editor, and professor John Brinckerhoff Jackson:

> *Roads no longer simply lead to places, they are places. And, as always, they play two important roles: as promoters of growth and dispersion, and as magnets around which new types of development can cluster. No other space in the modern landscape is so versatile.*

A product of the public and private work which more than a century ago was aimed at the economic development of the livestock industry in the region of Aysén, **the highway today is seen as a space with high touristic and economic potential.** Fueled by a variety of landscapes with wide uncorrupted natural areas, and therefore of great scenic attractiveness, this road is able to construct an important part of the local cultural narrative, and thus constitute a historical and political record of the whole region. Projects are currently taken under evaluation such as the stretch that will connect the Region of Los Lagos with the Region of Aysén, the sea route from Aysén to Puerto Natales, and the questioned route that crosses the Southern Ice Fields in that same region.

It is precisely the cultural and landscape heritage that in these and future expansions of the highway must be addressed as a local treasure to be exploited and revealed, to avoid the ecological disasters that occurred in the past and the degradation of an important part of the natural heritage of the region, by placing

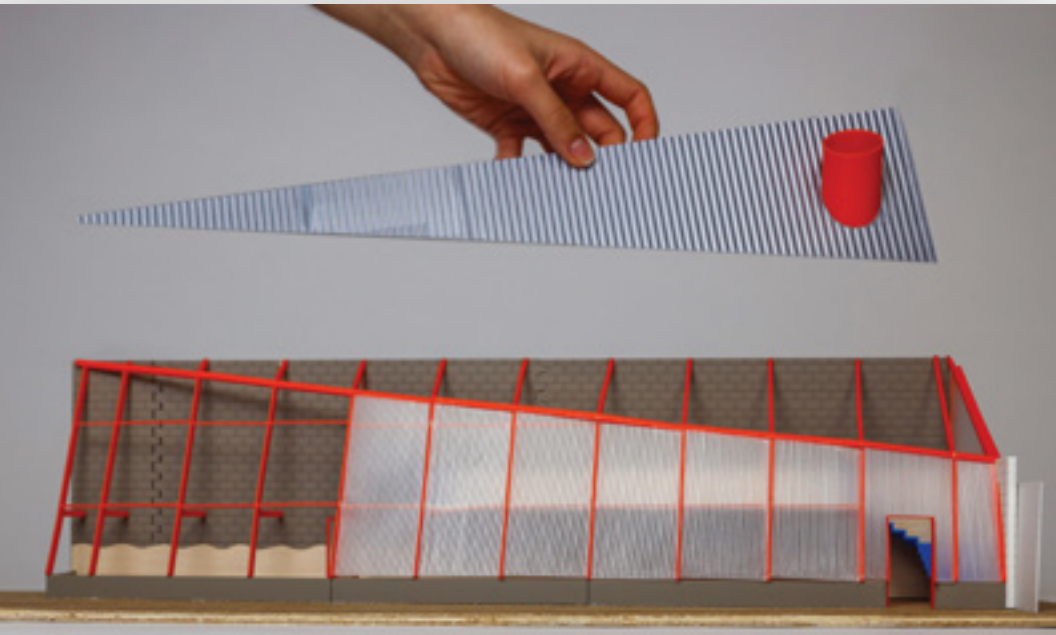
this natural heritage at the forefront and as catalyst of any regional infrastructure plans.

Understanding and approaching this piece of road infrastructure from its spatiality, its possibility to transform the physical environment, and its potential to fulfill the history, **allows us to explore a landscape which in some sections hides productive processes – currently consolidated as cultural – and in others reveals enormous territorial extensions of untamed nature and extraordinary wilderness.** In the encounter of both landscapes, the cultural heritage is revealed: built from the road as a story through new initiatives and projects, it expects to be given value.[3]

CH-7 road, Austral Highway (2016). © Nicolas Stutzin

3 This article was originally published in "Paisaje no es Naturaleza / Landscape is not Nature", edited by Camila Medina and published by Ediciones ARQ, 2020. Translated into English by Diane Greenstein

Soy migrante (I am a migrant)



Physical model for Monarca Play, a migrant playroom designed in Monterrey Mexico.

Marcos Escamilla-Guerrero is an architect from Ecatepec, Mexico, whose work explores the intersections of migration, infrastructure, and design. Shaped by early experiences with urban inequality, he sees architecture as a tool for mobility and justice. He studied at Monterrey Tech and Cornell University, and has contributed to large-scale projects across Mexico and the U.S. Through research and practice, he advocates for Latin American voices in architecture and investigates how design shapes transnational lives.

Words by Marcos Escamilla-Guerrero

Being Latin American in the United States as an architect, designer, and thinker carries a profound responsibility. In today's climate of mass deportations, xenophobia, and systemic discrimination, holding a position within a recognized academic institution, firm, or practice is not just a personal achievement—it comes with an obligation. **It is an obligation to acknowledge the privilege of visibility, of access to platforms where our voices can be heard,** and to use these spaces to advocate for the broader Latin American community. More than ever, I believe that as professionals, we must carry an agenda that amplifies the narratives of those topics that are often silenced, overlooked, or deliberately excluded from mainstream discourse.

I am a migrant. I arrived in the U.S. in 2020, stepping into an unfamiliar world to begin my architectural career. In Chicago, I experienced what it meant to have my identity questioned. In Mexico, I had never been asked to define my race or ethnicity, nor considered myself part of a specific demographic category. **In the U.S., I quickly realized what it means to be a minority in architecture.** Suddenly, I wasn't just a designer—I was a Latin American designer, a label that came with both external perceptions and an internal reckoning I hadn't faced before.

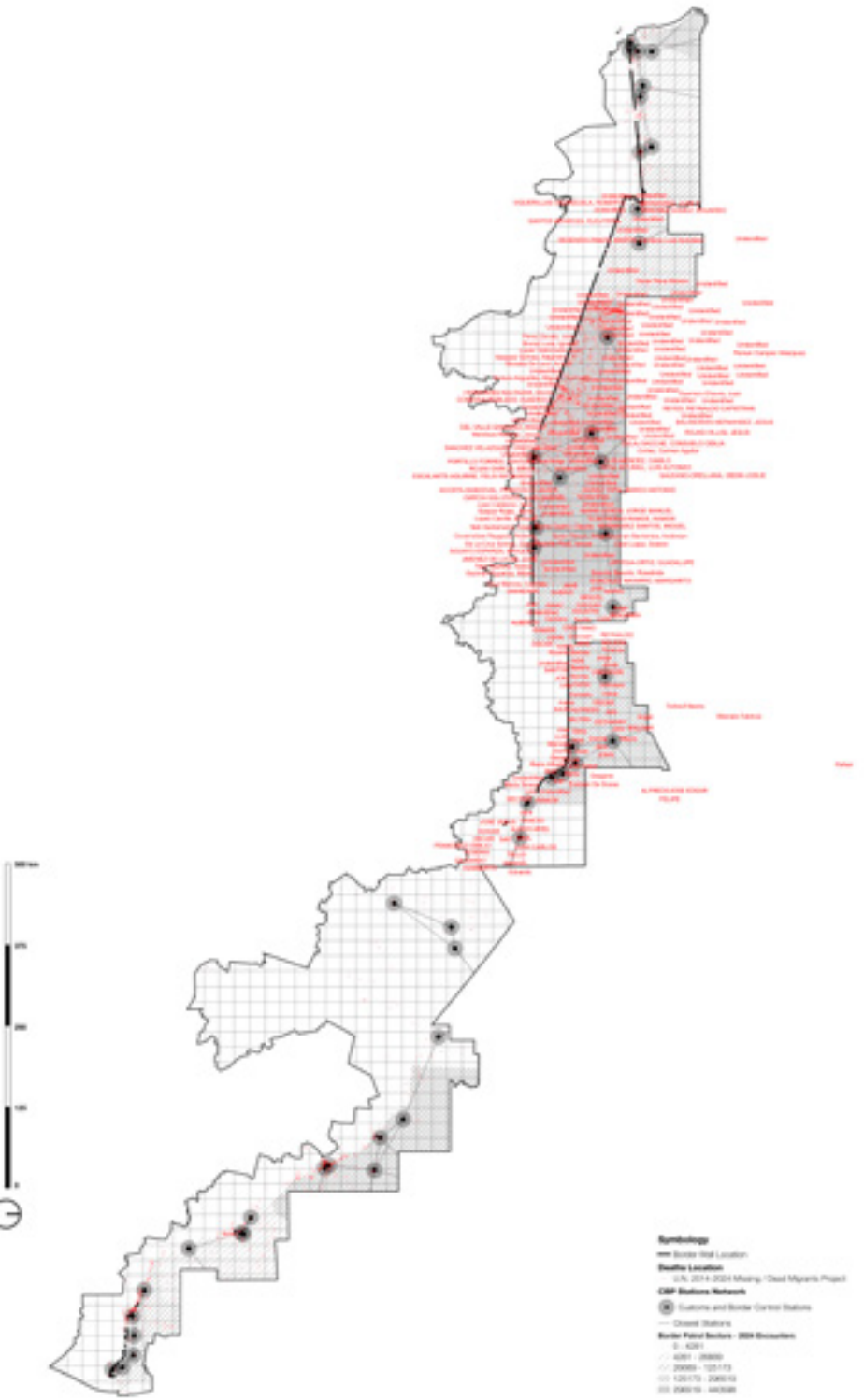
The weight of being seen as an outsider, of navigating spaces where Latin American voices were few and far between, was something I had to confront firsthand. Later, during my master's studies at Cornell AAP, this realization became even more pronounced. **The presence of Latin American immigrants like me in academic and professional circles was strikingly scarce.** The lack of representation was not just a statistic; it was something I felt in conversations, in classrooms, in studio critiques, and in the general cultural environment. According to official Cornell University data, Hispanic enrollment shrunk from 16.7% in Fall 2023 to 10.5% in Fall 2024[1]. This quantitative evidence only confirmed what I was already experiencing qualitatively: our absence is palpable.

This absence of representation made me recognize an urgent need: the need to expand the presence of Latin American architecture and design within both academia and practice in the United States. *Yo soy migrante*, and as such, I found in my own experience an opportunity to forge an agenda—an agenda that continuously interrogates the intersection of architecture and migration in the Latin American context. **Through this lens, I began identifying the absence of design efforts dedicated to migrant infrastructure,** a gap that remains largely unaddressed despite the scale of the crisis. Migrant communities are shaping urban territories, yet the spatial tools that respond to their needs are still underdeveloped.

Consequently, I dedicated my thesis at Cornell AAP to this very topic, hoping to spark conversations around a phenomenon that is not just an issue of policy or economics, but one that is fundamentally architectural. Migration is about movement, but it is also about space—about the environments that shape, facilitate, or hinder human displacement. **From borderlands to informal settlements, from detention centers to public transportation hubs, migration produces and transforms the built environment.** My research seeks to expose this reality, challenging architects and designers to rethink their role in this ongoing humanitarian crisis. Through my work, I remain committed to ensuring that my academic and professional contributions continue to push forward the discourse on Latin Ameri-

1 Lefkowitz, Melanie. "Q&A: Cornell Releases Demographic Data for 'exceptional' Incoming Class." Cornell Chronicle, September 25, 2024.

Countermap of the Mexico-U.S. borderland. Names in red represent dead migrants in the Arizona desert.

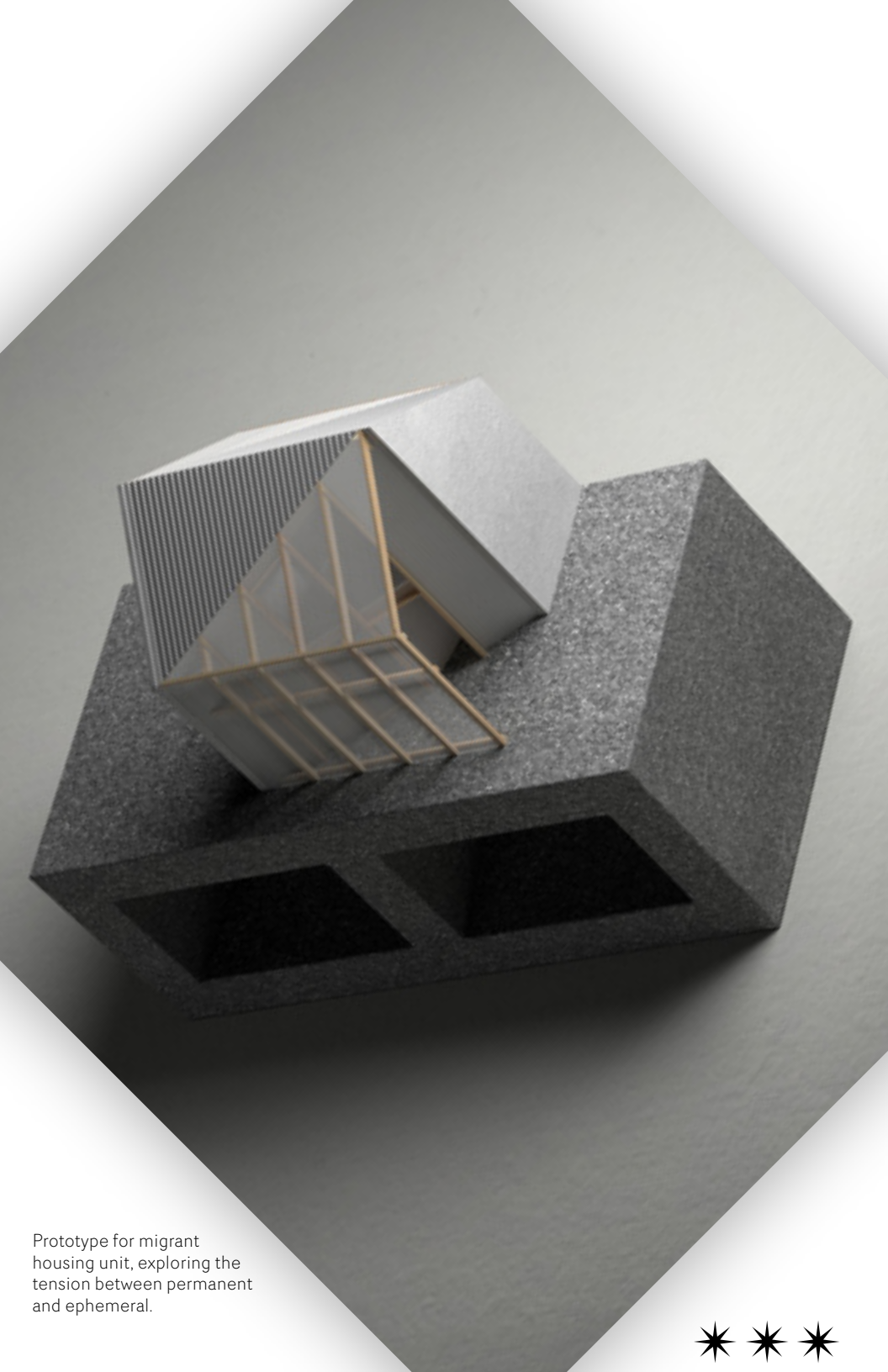


can migration in the U.S., particularly through the lens of architecture and design as both discipline and practice.

This realization reinforced my belief that we, as Latin Americans, have a responsibility. A responsibility to demonstrate our capacities, to carve spaces where our perspectives are recognized, and to ensure that our contributions are not diminished or tokenized. A responsibility to support one another, to foster networks that strengthen our presence in fields where we have historically been underrepresented. **And perhaps most importantly, a responsibility to engage in critical dialogue about the architectural landscape of our countries of origin,** acknowledging both its strengths and its limitations. These dialogues are necessary to build bridges—not only between geographies but between generations, disciplines, and practices.

In these pages I present a series of images that depict these efforts—visual explorations that iterate on migration through multiple perspectives and methodologies. These images reveal the many scales at which architects, designers, planners, and thinkers can engage with migration, showcasing approaches that move beyond policy discussions and into tangible, spatial interventions. **From speculative design to participatory cartography, from material experimentation to site-specific strategies, each image contributes to a collective vision:** one in which architecture is not neutral, but rather politically and ethically grounded.

By doing so, I hope to contribute to a broader Latin American agenda that insists on the necessity of design as a tool for advocacy, representation, and, ultimately, transformation. Our communities deserve spaces that reflect their struggles and aspirations, their memory and imagination. **And as Latin American architects in diaspora, we are uniquely positioned to carry that vision forward**—not as outsiders, but as cultural agents who can speak from a place of lived experience, critical insight, and hopeful defiance.



Prototype for migrant housing unit, exploring the tension between permanent and ephemeral.

Addresses 1978 - present

Visual Essay by Marcelo López-Dinardi

Marcelo López-Dinardi is an architect, writer, and Associate Professor at Texas A&M University. His work examines the cultural and political dimensions of architecture. He is editor of ***Architecture from Public to Commons*** and ***Degrowth***, and co-editor of Promiscuous Encounters. His research and writing have been featured in venues such as the Venice Biennale, JUMEX Museum, and ***The Avery Review***. Through teaching, publishing, and exhibition, he explores architecture as a medium of inquiry, critique, and collective imagination.

Addresses 1978-present visualizes the lived addresses location of a 46 year old person who has moved more than thirty times across the Americas and the Caribbean. In doing so, this work seeks to find defining principles in the locations of a given geographical identity. Are identities tied to location? Are identities geographical? **By collecting the addresses in text form, akin to a physical curriculum vitae (CV), and visualizing them using Google Maps tools,** this work intends to neutralize the charged nature of moving, displacement, and the constant cycle of new beginnings and belonging, as well as lives left behind, lost and new memories, and their role in shaping someone's identity.

In contrast to a work highlighting someone's lived experiences and unique characteristics-a usual body of work, **the distant aerial photographs and almost-automated houses views construct a frail notion of clarity,** an aspirational diagramming of life. However, the set of generically formatted images leaves us wondering how much a singular place has a role in defining entangled identities and if there is value in the clarity or the messiness of defining someone's identity to specific geographies anymore.

1970s 1980s 1990s

2000s 2010s 2020s

Talca, Chile
Calle Dos Norte 107
1981-83

Región de Valparaíso, Chile
Casablanca
1979-1980

Región de Valparaíso, Chile
Calle Central, Placilla
1979

Rancagua, Chile
Calle FE Turton
1978

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Escorial 708
1986

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delta 1343
1986

Valparaíso, Chile
Calle Fernández Albano 28
1986

Talca, Chile
Calle Quinco Norte
1983-1985

Talca, Chile
Calle Dos Norte 107
1981-83

Región de Valparaíso, Chile
Casablanca
1979-1980

Región de Valparaíso, Chile
Calle Central, Placilla
1979

Rancagua, Chile
Calle FE Turton
1978

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Escorial 708
1986

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delta 1343
1986

Valparaíso, Chile
Calle Fernández Albano 28
1986

Talca, Chile
Calle Quinco Norte
1983-1985

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Elida 1470
1989

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delta 1343
1989

Valparaíso, Chile
Avenida Los Placeres 977
1987-1989

Valparaíso, Chile
Calle Fernández Albano 28
1987

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Elida 1470
1989

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delta 1343
1989

Valparaíso, Chile
Avenida Los Placeres 977
1987-1989

Valparaíso, Chile
Calle Fernández Albano 28
1987

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Estancia 713
1992-1995

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delta 1267
1992

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Cordoba
1991

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delta 1343
1990

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Estancia 713
1992-1995

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delta 1267
1992

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Cordoba
1991

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delta 1343
1990

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Ariel 399
1996-1997

Viña del Mar, Chile
Avenida San Martín 800
1996

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Ariel 399
1995-1996

Limache, Chile
Calle 18 de Septtiembre 257
1995

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Ariel 399
1996-1997

Viña del Mar, Chile
Avenida San Martín 800
1996

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Ariel 399
1995-1996

Limache, Chile
Calle 18 de Septtiembre 257
1995

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Villamil 158
2001-2005

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delbrey 144
2000-2001

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Almirante Pinzón 107
1999-2000

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Arecibo 40
1997-1999

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Villamil 158
2001-2005

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Delbrey 144
2000-2001

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Almirante Pinzón 107
1999-2000

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Arecibo 40
1997-1999

Texas, USA
2804 Broadmoor Dr, Bryan
2020-present

Texas, USA
202 Main St, Bryan
2018-2020

New York, USA
1257 Pacific St, Brooklyn
2016-2018

New York, USA
606 W 148th St, New York
2013-2016

New York, USA
417 W 118th St, New York
2012-2013

New York, USA
536 W 113th St, New York
2011-2012

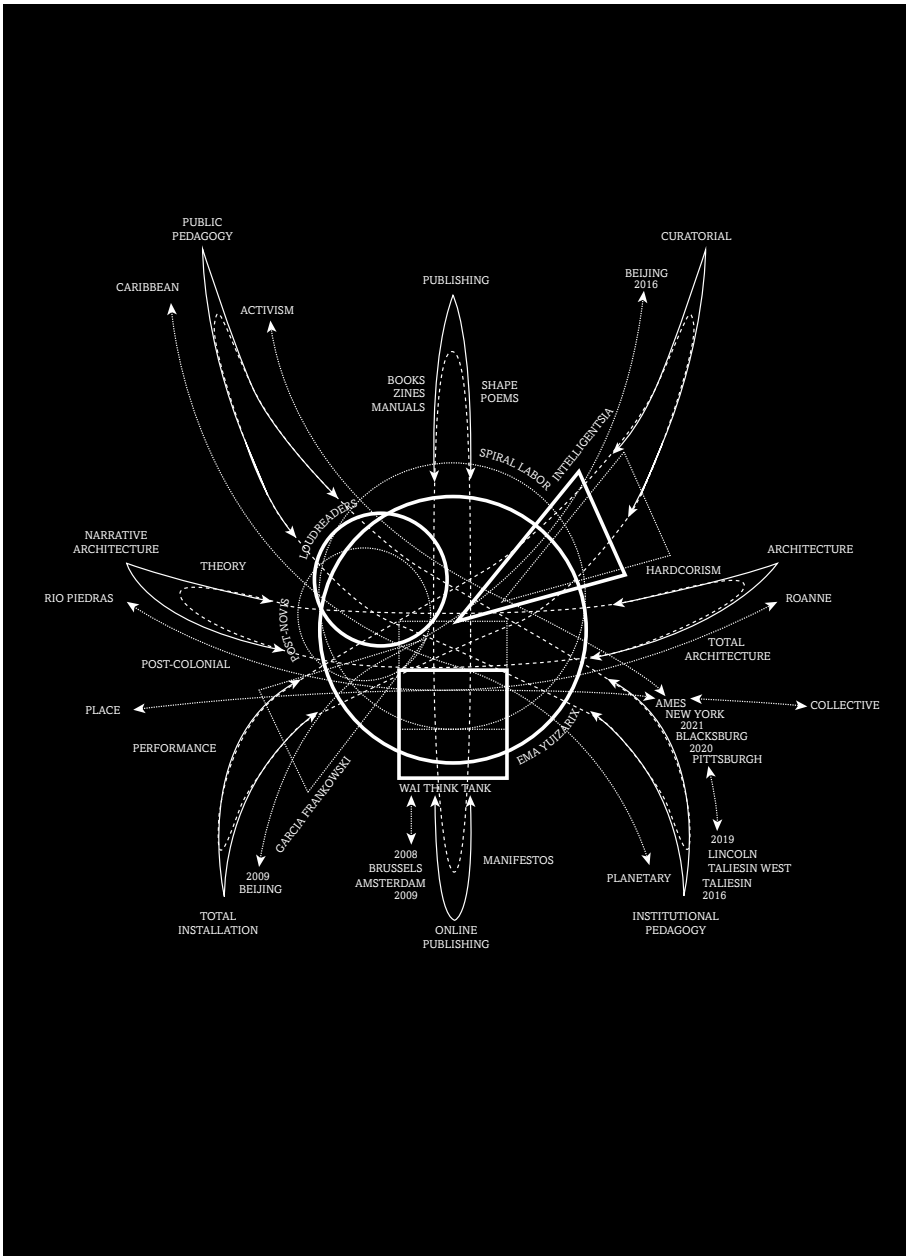
San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle San Jorge 168
2006-2011

San Juan, Puerto Rico
Calle Wilson 1428
2005-2006

Post-Colonial Boomerangs and Radical Collage

Interview by Adriana Castro and Diana Fernadez-Borunda

Cruz García is a Puerto Rican designer, theorist, and educator whose work explores architecture as a space for resistance, narrative, and radical thought. With Nathalie Frankowski, he co-founded WAI Architecture Think Tank and Loudreaders, platforms for emancipatory education and collective imagination. Together, they have published books and curated exhibitions that challenge disciplinary norms and colonial legacies. Through teaching and making, Garcia engages architecture as a political act—one that opens space for memory, critique, and transformation across geographies and generations.



Vejigante mask diagram, Courtesy WAI Think Tank.

Adriana: I was looking at one of your past presentations and I came across this graphic. Which looks super interesting, especially the way you described it, and matched the first question that we wanted to ask you, which is how does your Latin American identity shape the way you approach your practice? For instance, in your curatorial and pedagogical work, are there particular topics or conversations you bring to the table that are influenced by your roots or experiences from the region?

"Latin American" is a fraught term—one I engage with critically. Latinidad is deeply racialized, often reduced to a homogenized, Spanish-speaking identity that erases Indigenous and Afro-descendant realities. I locate myself within this tension: as an Afro-Caribbean person from Puerto Rico (Borikén), the world's oldest colony, I understand my history through the lens of the plantation, the archipelago, and the imposed fractures of colonialism. Puerto Rico's 400 years under Spanish rule and its ongoing U.S. colonization dating back to 1898, shape how I see myself—not as part of a nationalist project, but as part of a diasporic kinship that stretches across Abya Yala [the Indigenous name for the Americas], and beyond.

The Vejigante mask in the diagram embodies this: a Puerto Rican symbol of anti-colonial and anti-racist resistance, reclaimed from a European tradition to recenter African, and Indigenous, cosmologies. It's a metaphor for how we might reassemble fragmented histories within the framework of anti-colonialism. But even the term "Caribbean" is contested—derived from the colonial label "Carib" or Kalinago, (twisted into "cannibal" by Europeans). These names carry violence. So, when we speak of Latin America, we must ask: Who is centered? Who is erased? What does it mean to claim this identity when political borders were drawn by colonizers?"

Adriana: The diagram is beautiful, and what I find really interesting is the tension between what it was, the native and diaspora communities, and then all this that was imposed on them by colonial regimes. Because in a way, we can't say, we are just the original communities, we are the result of that act of colonization and everything that is imposed on top of us. So there are like lots of layers. And this idea

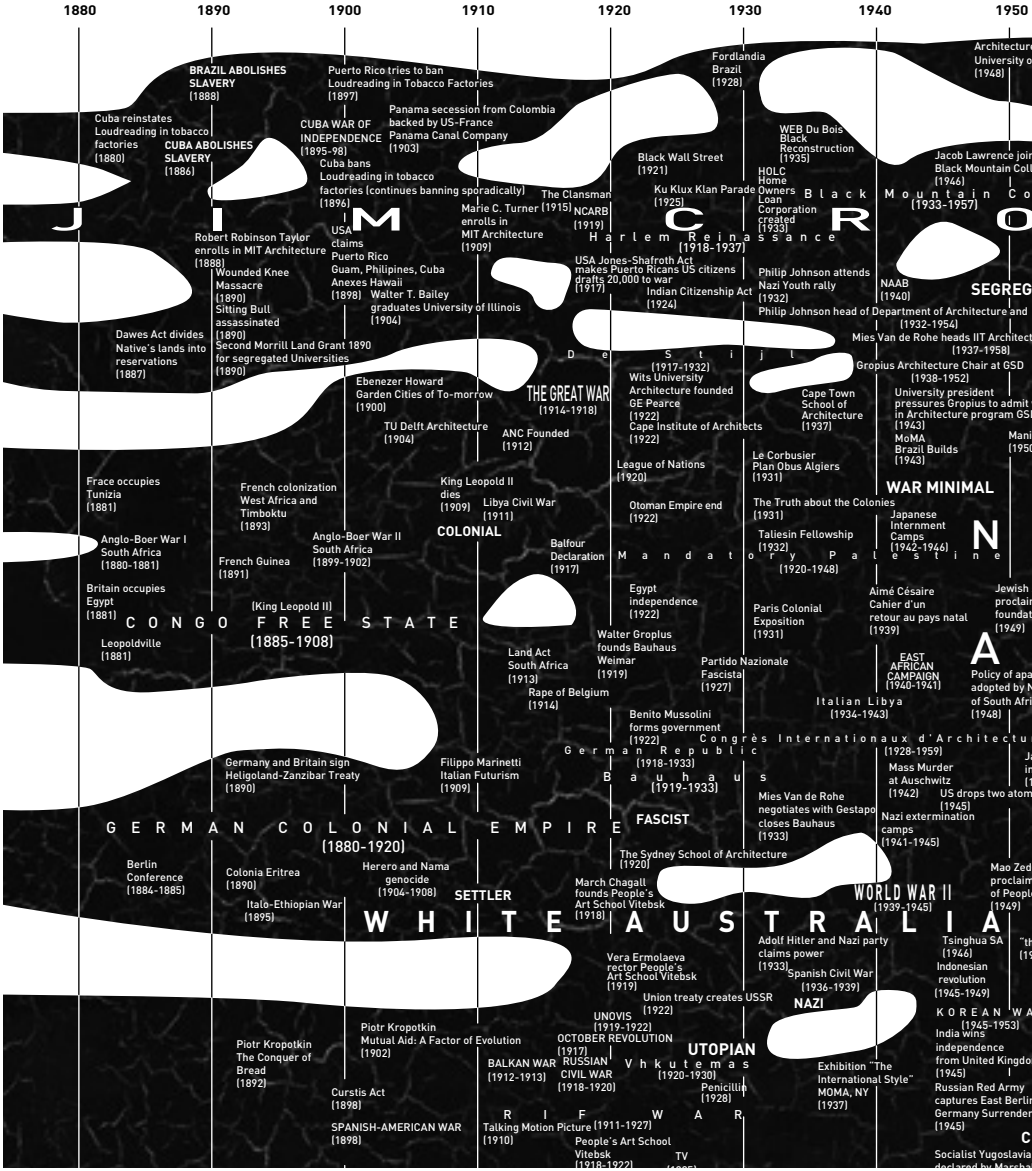
of looking at the Abya Yala, in a way, being Latin American gives a lens through which we can see the territory without political boundaries.

That tension is the heart of it. The diagram—like the Vejigante mask—is a palimpsest. It shows what was here before, what was imposed, and what we've made despite rupture. But "Latin America" itself is a colonial project: a term that homogenizes while erasing Afro-Indigenous realities. Even "Latino" shifts meaning depending on who says it and where. Would latino include people from Haiti and Garifuna people? In the U.S., it's a racialized category that benefits some people, while further marginalizing others.

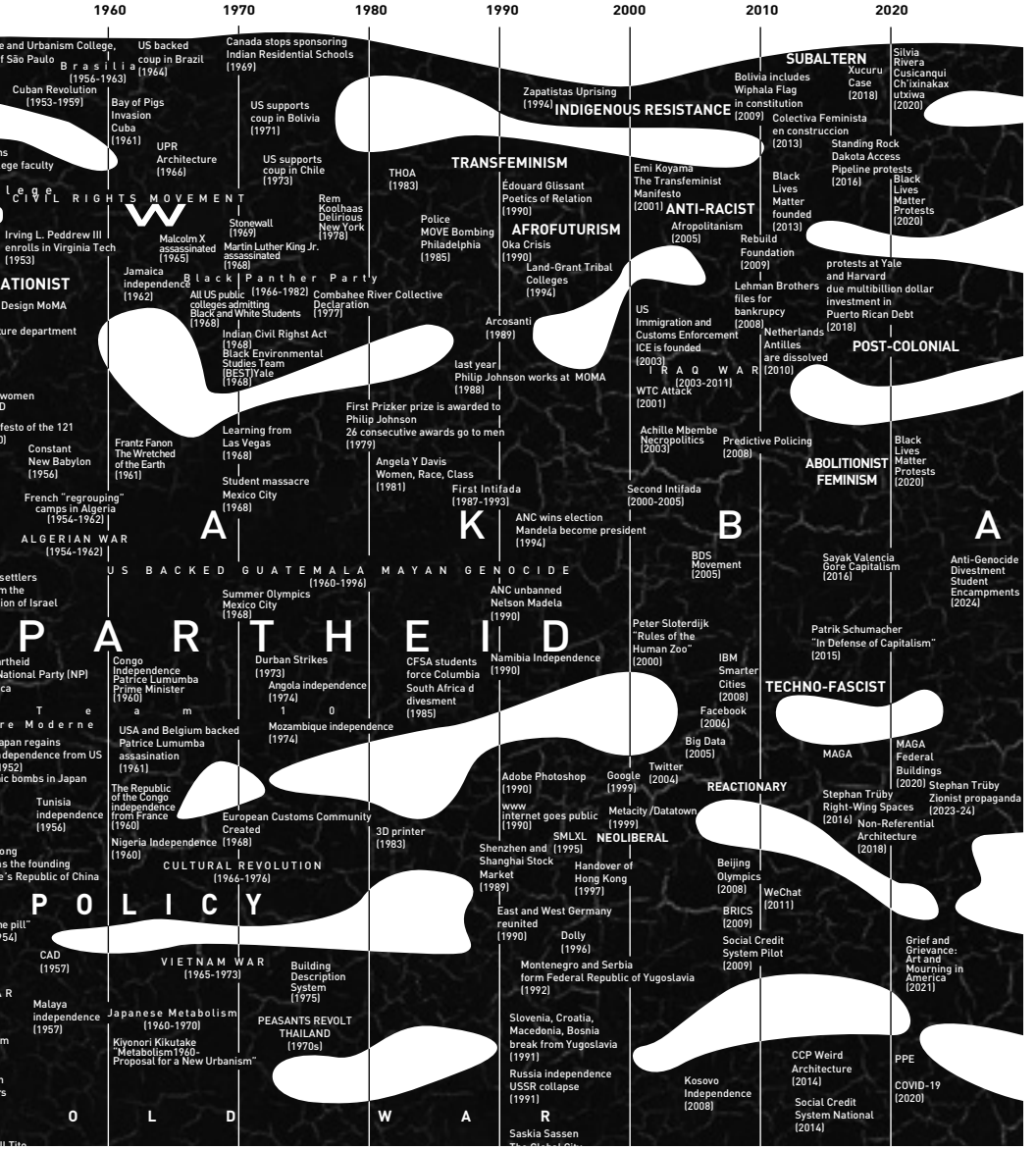
Adriana: Yes, totally.

So yes, there's a siblinghood in resisting borders, but we can't romanticize it. Colonial outposts still operate within our communities—think of how Puerto Rico's government collaborates with U.S. capital to displace locals. Solidarity requires naming those fractures.

"Latinidad is deeply racialized, often reduced to a homogenized, Spanish-speaking identity that erases Indigenous and Afro-descendant realities."


1880
1890
1900
1910
1920
1930
1940
1950
BRAZIL ABOLISHES SLAVERY (1888)
Cuba reinstates Loudreading in tobacco factories (1880)
CUBA ABOLISHES SLAVERY (1886)
Puerto Rico tries to ban Loudreading in Tobacco Factories (1897)
CUBA WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1895-98)
Panama secession from Colombia backed by US-France
Panama Canal Company (1903)
Cuba bans Loudreading in tobacco factories (continues banning sporadically) (1896)
USA claims Puerto Rico Guam, Philipines, Cuba Anexes Hawaii (1898)
Walter T. Bailey graduates University of Illinois (1904)
Robert Robinson Taylor enrolls in MIT Architecture (1888)
Wounded Knee Massacre (1890)
Sitting Bull assassinated (1890)
Second Morrill Land Grant 1890 for segregated Universities (1890)
Dawes Act divides Native's lands into reservations (1887)
Marie C. Turner enrolls in MIT Architecture (1909)
The Clansman (1915)
NCARB (1919)
Harlem Reinassance (1918-1937)
Black Wall Street (1921)
Ku Klux Klan Parade (1925)
Fordlandia Brazil (1928)
WEB Du Bois Black Reconstruction (1935)
HOLC Home Owners Loan Corporation created (1933)
Black Mountain Co (1933-1957)
Jacob Lawrence join Black Mountain Coll (1946)
Architecture University o (1948)
USA Jones-Shafroth Act makes Puerto Ricans US citizens drafts 20,000 to war (1917)
Indian Citizenship Act (1924)
Philip Johnson attends Nazi Youth rally (1932)
Philip Johnson head of Department of Architecture and (1932-1954)
NAAB (1940)
SEGREG
Mies Van de Rohe heads IIT Architect (1937-1958)
De Stijl (1917-1932)
THE GREAT WAR (1914-1918)
Ebenezer Howard Garden Cities of To-morrow (1900)
TU Delft Architecture (1904)
ANC Founded (1912)
Wits University Architecture founded
GE Pearce (1922)
Cape Institute of Architects (1922)
Cape Town School of Architecture (1937)
Gropius Architecture Chair at GSD (1938-1952)
University president pressures Gropius to admit in Architecture program GS (1963)
MoMA Brazil Builds (1943)
Mani (195
Frace occupies Tunizia (1881)
French colonization West Africa and Timboktu (1893)
King Leopold II dies (1909)
Libya Civil War (1911)
COLONIAL
Anglo-Boer War I South Africa (1880-1881)
French Guinea (1891)
Anglo-Boer War II South Africa (1899-1902)
Balfour Declaration (1917)
League of Nations (1920)
Otoman Empire end (1922)
Le Corbusier Plan Obus Algiers (1931)
WAR MINIMAL
The Truth about the Colonies (1931)
Taliesin Fellowship (1932)
Japanese Internment Camps (1942-1946)
Mandatory Palestine (1920-1948)
N
Britain occupies Egypt (1881)
(King Leopold II)
CONGO FREE STATE (1885-1908)
Leopoldville (1881)
Egypt independence (1922)
Paris Colonial Exposition (1931)
Aimé Césaire Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (1939)
Jewish proclair foundat (1949)
Land Act South Africa (1913)
Rape of Belgium (1914)
Walter Groplus founds Bauhaus Weimar (1919)
Partido Nazionale Fascista (1927)
EAST AFRICAN CAMPAIGN (1940-1941)
A
Policy of apa adopted by N of South Afri (1948)
Italian Libya (1934-1943)
Benito Mussolini forms government (1922)
German Republic (1918-1933)
Congrès Internationaux d'Architectu (1928-1959)
Germany and Britain sign Heligoland-Zanzibar Treaty (1890)
Filippo Marinetti Italian Futurism (1909)
Bauhaus (1919-1933)
Mies Van de Rohe negotiates with Gestapo closes Bauhaus (1933)
Mass Murder at Auschwitz (1942)
US drops two atom (1945)
Nazi extermination camps (1941-1945)
FASCIST
GERMAN COLONIAL EMPIRE (1880-1920)
The Sydney School of Architecture (1920)
Berlin Conference (1884-1885)
Colonia Eritrea (1890)
Herero and Nama genocide (1904-1908)
Italo-Ethiopian War (1895)
SETTLER
March Chagall founds People's Art School Vitebsk (1918)
WORLD WAR II (1939-1945)
Mao Zed proclaim of Peopl (1949)
WHITE AUSTRALIA
Adolf Hitler and Nazi party claims power (1933)
Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)
Tsinghua SA (1946)
Indonesian revolution (1945-1949)
Vera Ermolaeva rector People's Art School Vitebsk (1919)
Union treaty creates USSR (1922)
NAZI
UNOVIS (1919-1922)
OCTOBER REVOLUTION (1917)
Piotr Kropotkin Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution (1902)
Piotr Kropotkin The Conquer of Bread (1892)
BALKAN WAR (1912-1913)
RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR (1918-1920)
UTOPIAN
Vhkutemas (1920-1930)
Penicillin (1928)
Exhibition "The International Style" MOMA, NY (1937)
KOREAN WA (1945-1953)
India wins independence from United Kingdo (1945)
Russian Red Army captures East Berlin Germany Surrender (1945)
Curstis Act (1898)
SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR (1898)
RIF WAR (1911-1927)
Talking Motion Picture (1910)
People's Art School Vitebsk (1918-1922)
TV
Socialist Yugoslavia

WAI Think Tank, Chronocartography of anti-Black regimes, reworking Charles Jencks' Evolutionary Tree, 2020. Courtesy WAI Think Tank.


1960
1970
1980
1990
2000
2010
2020
Brasília (1956-1963)
US backed coup in Brazil (1964)
Canada stops sponsoring Indian Residential Schools (1969)
Cuban Revolution (1953-1959)
Bay of Pigs Invasion
Cuba (1961)
UPR Architecture (1966)
US supports coup in Bolivia (1971)
US supports coup in Chile (1973)
CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
Malcolm X assassinated (1965)
Stonewall (1969)
Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated (1968)
Rem Koolhaas Delirious New York (1978)
Irving L. Peddrew III enrolls in Virginia Tech (1953)
Jamaica independence (1962)
Black Panther Party (1966-1982)
All US public colleges admitting Black and White Students (1968)
Combahee River Collective Declaration (1977)
Indian Civil Righst Act (1968)
Black Environmental Studies Team (BEST) Yale (1968)
Design MoMA
Learning from Las Vegas (1968)
Frantz Fanon The Wretched of the Earth (1961)
Constant New Babylon (1956)
Student massacre Mexico City (1968)
French "regrouping" camps in Algeria (1954-1962)
ALGERIAN WAR (1954-1962)
US BACKED GUATEMALA MAYAN GENOCIDE (1960-1996)
Summer Olympics Mexico City (1968)
Congo Independence Patrice Lumumba Prime Minister (1960)
Durban Strikes (1973)
Angola independence (1974)
Mozambique independence (1974)
USA and Belgium backed Patrice Lumumba assasination (1961)
The Republic of the Congo independence from France (1960)
Nigeria Independence (1960)
Tunisia independence (1956)
European Customs Community Created (1968)
CULTURAL REVOLUTION (1966-1976)
CAD (1957)
VIETNAM WAR (1965-1973)
Building Description System (1975)
Malaya independence (1957)
Japanese Metabolism (1960-1970)
PEASANTS REVOLT THAILAND (1970s)
Kiyonori Kikutake "Metabolism1960- Proposal for a New Urbanism"
THOA (1983)
TRANSFEMINISM
Édouard Glissant Poetics of Relation (1990)
Police MOVE Bombing Philadelphia (1985)
AFROFUTURISM
Oka Crisis (1990)
Land-Grant Tribal Colleges (1994)
Arcosanti (1989)
last year Philip Johnson works at MOMA (1988)
First Prizker prize is awarded to Philip Johnson
26 consecutive awards go to men (1979)
Angela Y Davis Women, Race, Class (1981)
First Intifada (1987-1993)
ANC wins election Mandela become president (1994)
CFSA students force Columbia South Africa d divesment (1985)
Namibia Independence (1990)
ANC unbanned Nelson Madela (1990)
Zapatistas Uprising (1994)
INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE
Emi Koyama The Transfeminist Manifesto (2001)
ANTI-RACIST
Afropolitanism (2005)
US Immigration and Customs Enforcement ICE is founded (2003)
IRAQ WAR (2003-2011)
WTC Attack (2001)
Achille Mbembe Necropolitics (2003)
Second Intifada (2000-2005)
BDS Movement (2005)
Peter Sloterdijk "Rules of the Human Zoo" (2000)
IBM Smarter Cities (2008)
Facebook (2006)
Big Data (2005)
Adobe Photoshop (1990)
Google (1999)
Twitter (2004)
www internet goes public (1990)
Metacity /Datatown (1999)
SMLXL (1995)
NEOLIBERAL
Shenzhen and Shanghai Stock Market (1989)
Handover of Hong Kong (1997)
East and West Germany reunited (1990)
Dolly (1996)
Montenegro and Serbia form Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992)
Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia break from Yugoslavia (1991)
Russia independence USSR collapse (1991)
Saskia Sassen
Bolivia includes Wiphala Flag in constitution (2009)
SUBALTERN
Xucuru Case (2018)
Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui Ch'ixinakax utxiwa (2020)
Colectiva Feminista en construccion (2013)
Standing Rock Dakota Access Pipeline protests (2016)
Black Lives Matter founded (2013)
Black Lives Matter Protests (2020)
Rebuild Foundation (2009)
protests at Yale and Harvard due multibillion dollar investment in Puerto Rican Debt (2018)
Lehman Brothers files for bankrupcy (2008)
Netherlands Antilles are dissolved (2010)
POST-COLONIAL
Predictive Policing (2008)
ABOLITIONIST FEMINISM
Black Lives Matter Protests (2020)
Sayak Valencia Gore Capitalism (2016)
Anti-Genocide Divestment Student Encampments (2024)
Patrik Schumacher "In Defense of Capitalism" (2015)
TECHNO-FASCIST
MAGA
MAGA Federal Buildings (2020)
Stephan Trüby Zionist propaganda (2023-24)
REACTIONARY
Stephan Trüby Right-Wing Spaces (2016)
Non-Referential Architecture (2018)
Beijing Olympics (2008)
WeChat (2011)
BRICS (2009)
Social Credit System Pilot (2009)
Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America (2021)
CCP Weird Architecture (2014)
Social Credit System National (2014)
Kosovo Independence (2008)
PPE
COVID-19 (2020)

“Latin American political discourse often romanticizes mestizaje—the myth of harmonious racial mixing.”

Diana: So, you’ve explored how architecture can reflect or challenge political and social issues. What role do you think architecture plays in shaping or changing Latin American identities, especially with all the political changes happening recently?

Architecture in the Americas is colonial infrastructure. From Canada to Argentina, cities were built over Indigenous geographies—literally entombing them under plazas and churches. Who gets called an “architect”? Who’s relegated to “vernacular” builder? The question isn’t about “identity” but about power: who designs, who’s displaced, and who’s erased.

Concrete high-rises in Lima, steel grids in São Paulo—these materials aren’t neutral. They’re tools of extraction, just like the mines that fuel them. Meanwhile, Afro-Colombian activist Marilyn Machado Mosquera reminds us in a recent conversation we had that We are territory, but we’ve been forced to unlearn our territory. Our bodies carry ancestral knowledge, but coloniality demands a rupture and the forgetting of this knowledge. Our bodies are the connection to the territories where we come from, like we are the landscapes we come

from. “Architecture”, like design or whatever we do, should allow us to embody this knowledge, but coloniality makes it impossible.

So perhaps “architecture” isn’t the right word. What we need are verbs, not nouns: unmaking, resisting, landing, repairing, remembering, imagining, building.

Diana: Yes, I think those are, like, really great questions Cruz.[…] So, how do you approach the different layers of Latin American identity, especially in places where indigenous, colonial, and modern influences all mix together?

I think this is the question of creolization, or mestizaje, which is also kind of a racist trope in Latin America. “Latin American” political discourse often romanticizes mestizaje—the myth of harmonious racial mixing. Meanwhile, Black and Indigenous communities face material exclusion: unequal infrastructure, dispossession, and systemic racism. The mestizaje narrative insists, “We’re all mixed, so race doesn’t matter.” But look at Lima, at Rio, at San Juan—who lives in the favelas, the caseríos, the barrios marginalizados? Coloniality persists in brick and mortar. I don’t think this is purely a Latin American thing, but even within the Caribbean is already quite problematic. So, I’m less interested to talk about how in Puerto Rico most of us have indigenous or African heritage, but how some people have been materially oppressed because they’re Black, or how poverty is racialized. And the cities have been designed in such a way, in many places where indigenous people have been dispossessed across the continent. And that’s the history I want to look at, not so much about, if it has afro or indigenous characteristics but what is the material political history? And again, I’m mostly answering everything with questions today. I think Latin American is not such a useful term. Like you wouldn’t describe yourself like that back at home.

Adriana: Yes, I guess, in my case, back at home I describe myself from the city I’m from.

Right! Where are you from?

Adriana: Lima.

And Lima has its own very problematic politics, right? Who has been historically marginalized there? Is the discourse about blending-in useful, or is it detrimental for justice? The discourse of mestizaje says, "you know, we don't have to talk about race because we are all mixed". Actually, no, we have to talk about it because we can see that these people have been historically marginalized, because you're erasing them, because you're saying that everybody is mixed.

Adriana: I guess there is also a tension. I was brought up in the narrative of like, we're all mixed, so we're all the same. But at the same time, when you start saying, no we're not, that we are these different types of people you start classifying.

The narrative of the mestizaje is so strong. It is so powerful and also kind of enticing. It's kind of a "beautiful" story about sameness and togetherness. "We are all mixed, therefore it's all good." But you can tell, materially this is not reality. Racialization is real, because you can see which peoples have more access to material wealth, to political power or, who has more access to more infrastructure. And at the same time, who has been left out, who has been marginalized. Even if society would like to not "classify" people, people have been classified by colonialism for hundreds of years, with very material repercussions.

So, I think that's the complexity. It's not so much about the blending-in, but about how difficult it is to define an "identity." I believe we're not one culture. We are many, many different cultures, some of them more accepted than others. Some fighting against their erasure.

Diana: So your work often looks at identity through abstract or collaged representation. How do you think that approach connects with the diverse identities we see in Latin American cultures, particularly when thinking about post- colonialism?

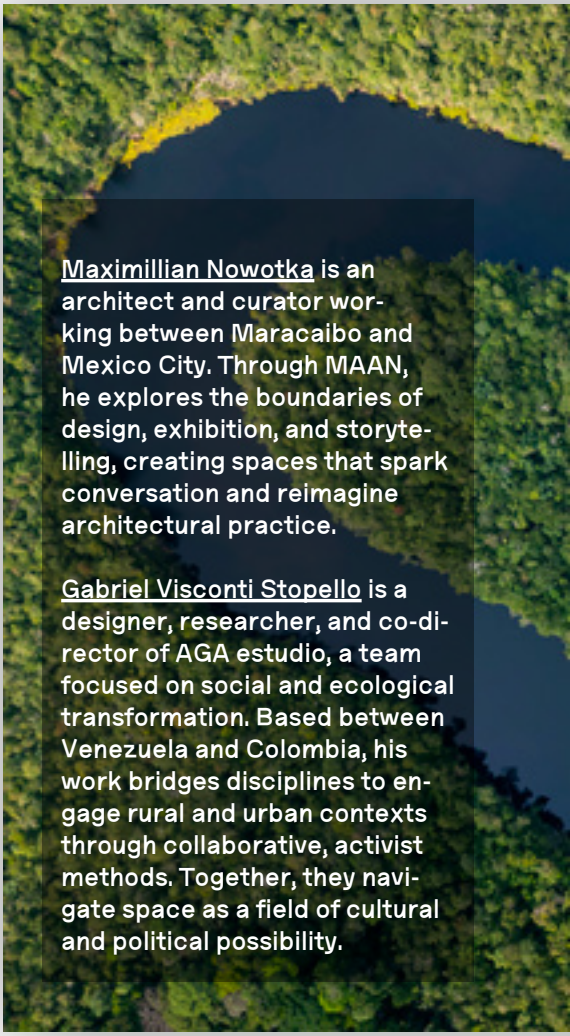
So first, I have to define what post-colonialism is for us. We used that concept in a way that is different from the social sciences or the humanities. In the humanities and social sciences, post-colonial means after political independence from colonizing powers (for example Spain or Portugal or France leaving Latin America) We recognize that

colonial powers always refuse to completely leave, the post-colonial is not what happens after the colony, but what happens when the colony is everywhere. And that goes back to the collage. Why collage is such a useful tool for us? Because it allows us to layer all those histories. It allows us to bring with the images that we use as reference, the baggage that comes with them; the whole political context, the material historical context of these images.

The narrative of the before versus the after colonialism is flattening, and oversimplistic. And collage is a way of layering, of storytelling, of not flattening, but like presenting a bunch of histories together of things that wouldn't have been put together originally. And I think that relates to the post-colonial world, not after the colony, but to the colony being everywhere, to the colony returning to empire like the Boomerang that Aimé Césaire talked about in *Discourse on Colonialism*. So here the collage allows us to bring all these distinct histories and create new images that connect back to those histories, and allows to make new histories. The collage for us, is like a Post-Colonial Boomerang. So, every image is telling a different story that embeds all of these different worlds.

"The collage for us, is like a Post-Colonial Boomerang. So, every image is telling a different story that embeds all of these different worlds."

POST-EXTRACTIVISM IMAGINARIES



Maximillian Nowotka is an architect and curator working between Maracaibo and Mexico City. Through MAAN, he explores the boundaries of design, exhibition, and storytelling, creating spaces that spark conversation and reimagine architectural practice.

Gabriel Visconti Stopello is a designer, researcher, and co-director of AGA estudio, a team focused on social and ecological transformation. Based between Venezuela and Colombia, his work bridges disciplines to engage rural and urban contexts through collaborative, activist methods. Together, they navigate space as a field of cultural and political possibility.

Maximilian Nowotka y Gabriel Visconti Stopello invited to the 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Carlo Ratti.

Words by Gabriel Visconti Stopello (AGA Studio) & Maximillian Nowotka (MAAN)

The native peoples of the Amazon, specifically in the Orinoquía region in Venezuela, **have historically cultivated diverse knowledge and practices to maintain ecological balance within their territories.** William M. Denevan, in The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492 (1992), argues and evidences that the Amazon forest is a dynamic mosaic, shaped by indigenous habitat modifications that managed species distribution and abundance to foster life.

This perspective aligns with the concept of "Buen Vivir"[1], where all species that inhabit this territory are interconnected in interdependent networks, essential for the viability of the ecosystem.

While this worldview fosters the field of practice and imagination, promoting cohabitation and mutual nourishment between those who inhabit the planet, the pervasive human impact, evidenced by the degradation and dispossession of the territory, has triggered a global climate emergency. **This crisis, driven by dominant economic models, disproportionately affects vulnerable communities,** revealing a lack of 'responsible' mutuality. This systemic crisis, we argue, stems from the modern Western development paradigm (Escobar, 2012).

Today, extractivist practices are encroaching upon 'natural' territories, devastating entire communities. In Venezuela, this is starkly evident in the Orinoquía region, where mineral exploitation has seized 12% of the national territory[2], an area comparable to Cuba, Panama, or Costa Rica. **This situation also affects a wider sphere, on a planetary and more-than-human scale,** where the impact extends to at least 11% of the planet's freshwater bodies, 40% of trees, and 25% of terrestrial biodiversity, exacerbating climate change through increased temperatures, wildfires, droughts, and disrupted seasons (IPCC, 2022). Pollution, disease, and violence further compound these effects.

Addressing this 'wounded territory' requires a form of responsibility that we understand as 'response-ability' in terms of Donna Haraway[3]; it doesn't have a mechanical solution. It necessitates a process of 'being-with,' prioritizing interdependence over exploitation. Haraway urges us to abandon fantasies of civilizational restarts that will give rise to a society where all the environmental de-

1 The term "Good living" can be explored, in our case we refer to the explorations of the concepts Sumaq Kawsay, Suma Qamaña and Balu Wala, which from indigenous cosmovisions offer alternative perspectives of coexistence.

2 Since 2019, the NGO SOS Orinoco has kept a meticulous record of this territorial area, which has served as a documentary source for the research.
Visit https://sosorinoco.org/es/informes/

3 In the book Seguir con el problema. Generar parentesco en el Chthuluceno, the author exposes and explores the need to "cultivate" thinking-with and acting-with, as taking charge of the situation.

gradation already generated will dissolve as a bad dream and, instead, engage with the present, learning to inhabit a wounded world.

This approach fosters reciprocal, material, and affective relationships with our environment, cultivating kinship. As Astrida Neimanis states in Aprender con el agua (Culturas hidrocomunes: arte, pedagogía y prácticas de cuidado en las Américas, 2024):

> *Estamos hechos de lo que está afuera. Lo que está ahí afuera nos constituye" [We are made of what is outside. What is out there constitutes us] (p.36).*

In the Amazonian context, the forest and its communities, through their spatial practices, offer invaluable natural and collective intelligence. **These insights, gleaned from lived experience, can inform localized actions to address complex environmental challenges** while critically examining the coloniality of nature.

Confronting the degradation of the venezuelan Orinoquía and the Amazon, requires understanding these territories as active landscapes, shaped "no surgen gracias a los planes humanos, sino a pesar de ellos" [not by human plans, but in spite of them] (Tsing, 2021, p.363) and generate conditions for weird assemblages[4] of multi-species collaboration to emerge, capable of fostering expanded acts, given their condition not only of open meeting where forms of life congregate, but also create them (Tsing, 2021).

These landscapes foster multi-species collaborations, where soil, violence, air, trees, pollution, housing, animals, rivers, disease, and humans engage in "intercambios múltiples, polivalentes, a la vez materiales y simbólicos" [multiple, polyvalent, material and symbolic exchanges] (Rivera, 2018, p. 46), creating kinship, since, without the others, it is not possible to build that human subject that assumes self-sufficiency. This interdependence gives birth to a chimera of a strange architecture to come[5], with a type of identity

4 We use this notion in the sense given to it by Rosa Whiteley in the publication Horizontes Rosados. Arquitecturas vivientes de una nube tóxica.

5 A form of resistance and creation, which allows us to build new identities and ways of life based on diversity, and at the same time will root us even more in our communities and local territories, as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui proposes for the ch'ixi.

Wiwa basket

Casabe
Typical roots food

Araguato
Terrestrial animal species

Caucho tree

Cedro tree

Ceiba plant

Orinoco toronia
River animal species

Manaca tree

Guacamaya bird

Palo maria tree

Curiaras
Typical river boat

Copoazú fruit

Waja basket

Tupiro fruit

Moriche Palm

Seje palm

Warao river dwelling
Typical dwelling of the Warao
ethnic group

Orquidea
National flower of venezuela

Merey fruit

Mangle tree

Victoria Amazonica plant

Churuata Piaroa
Typical dwelling of the Piaroa
ethnic group

Churuata Yekuana
Typical dwelling of the Yekuana
ethnic group

Rabano fruit

Sarrapia flower

Shaborio Yanomami
Typical dwelling of the Yanomami
ethnic group

Temiche palm

Yuca fruit

Arco Minero del Orinoco (AMO) created by Venezuelan Government Decree No. 2.248 in 2016.

Arco Minero del Orinoco (AMO) creato dal Decreto Governativo Venezuelano N. 2.248 nel 2016

Protected areas and forest reserves: includes 6 Areas under Special Management Regime (ABRAE).

Aree protette e riserve forestali: include 6 Aree sotto Regime di Gestione Speciale (ABRAE).

Extension: 111.843,70 km² (12,4% of national territory). Larger than half the countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

Estensione: 111.843,70 km² (12,4% del territorio nazionale). Più grande della metà dei paesi della regione dell'America Latina e dei Caraibi.

Mining scope: Government plans 2.132 territory mining intervention (2.382 km²).

Estrazione mineraria: Il governo prevede l'intervento minerario sul 2,13% del territorio (2.382 km²).

Mining sites: 3.718 identified in Amazonas and Bolívar states inside and outside the limits of AMO.

Siti minerari: 3.718 identificati negli stati di Amazonas e Bolívar dentro e fuori i limiti dell'AMO.

Las Brisas-Las Cristinas: La più grande miniera d'oro in Venezuela, quarta a livello globale

Las Brisas-Las Cristinas: La più grande miniera d'oro in Venezuela, quarta a livello globale.

Gold reserves: 4.300 certified tons. Largest in Western Hemisphere, second globally after Australia.

Riserve d'oro: 4.300 tonnellate certificate. Le più grandi nell'emisfero occidentale, seconde a livello globale dopo l'Australia.

Diamond reserves: 1.020 million carats.

Riserve di diamanti: 1.020 milioni di carati.

Copper reserves: 2.5 million tons.

Riserve di rame: 2.5 milioni di tonnellate.

Rare earth minerals: Coltan, iron, bauxite reserves pending certification.

Minerali delle terre rare: Riserve di coltan, ferro, bauxite in attesa di certificazione.

Protected area impact: 22.000 ha deforestation within the Caura, Canaima and Yapacana national parks.

Impatto sulle aree protette: 22.000 ettari di deforestazione nei parchi nazionali di Caura, Canaima e Yapacana.

140.000 ha lost between 2016-2020 of primary forest in the Venezuelan Amazon.

140.000 ettari di foreste primarie perse tra il 2016-2020 nell'Amazzonia venezuelana.

Deforestation in the Venezuelan Amazon is increasing rapidly due to mining, fires and agriculture.

La deforestazione nell'Amazzonia venezuelana sta aumentando rapidamente a causa dell'attività mineraria, degli incendi e dell'agricoltura.

Violence: 417 murders (2016-2023).

Violence: 417 omicidi (2016-2023)

Migration species
Orinoco river
Biodiverse
Forests losses
Protected area impact: 22.000 ha / 140.000 ha lost between 2016-2020 of primary forest in / Venezuela is the 6th most bio
ns

111.843,70Km2 / 12.4% of national territory / Mining scope: 2.362 km² / Mining sites: 3.716 / Gold reserves: 4.300 metrical tons / Diamond reserves: 1.020 million carats / Copper reserves: 2.5 million tons
Indigenous displacement
Fires and agriculture
Deforestation

Indigenous displacement: Ayoreos, Yanomami and Ye'kuanas communities forced to abandon lands or work in mines due to armed groups and economic pressures.

Sfollamento indigeno: Le comunità Ayoreos, Yanomami e Ye'kuanas sono state costrette ad abbandonare le loro o a lavorare nelle miniere a causa di gruppi armati e pressioni economiche.

Reports of human rights violations (sexual exploitation, trafficking, forced labor) exist but lack official verification.

Esistono segnalazioni di violazioni dei diritti umani (sfruttamento sessuale, traffico, lavoro forzato) ma mancano verifiche ufficiali.

Indigenous presence: 198 communities from 16 ethnic groups (Eñepá, Panare, Uwopuyo, Pemon, Chapa, Arutani, Cumanagoto, Sanema, Kariña, Hoti, Yanomami, Banaré, Kurripaco, Yekuana, Piaroa, Sanema, Hanoma, Warao, Akawayo and Arawako). In 2016, the AMO population reached 1.56 million inhabitants (4.89% of the national population).

Presenza indigena: 198 comunità di 16 gruppi etnici (Eñepá, Panare, Uwopuyo, Pemon, Chapa, Arutani, Cumanagoto, Sanema, Kariña, Hoti, Yanomami, Banaré, Kurripaco, Yekuana, Piaroa, Sanema, Hanoma, Warao, Akawayo e Arawako.

63% of indigenous territories are affected by mining activities.

Il 63% dei territori indigeni è interessato da attività minerarie.

Venezuela is the 6th most biodiverse country in Latin America, with Bolívar and Amazonas being the most biodiverse states.

Il Venezuela è il 6° paese per biodiversità in America Latina e gli stati di Bolívar ed Amazonas sono quelli con maggior diversità biologica in assoluto.

The Orinoco River is one of the three largest deltas in the Americas, contributing 15% of global freshwater flow to the world's seas.

Il delta del fiume Orinoco è uno dei tre più grandi estuari delle Americhe, contribuendo al 15% del flusso globale di acqua dolce verso i mari del mondo.

Venezuela contributes 48% of the total number of malaria cases in the Americas (2016).

Il Venezuela si contano il 48% del numero totale di casi di malaria nelle Americhe (2016).

Presence of mercury in the Orinoco ethnic groups is more than 35%, considerably higher than the parameters established by the WHO.

La presenza di mercurio nei gruppi etnici dell'Orinoco è superiore al 35%, considerevolmente più alta dei parametri stabiliti dall'OMS.

Other sources of contamination result from the use of cyanide and fuels in mining.

Altre fonti di contaminazione derivano dall'uso di cianuro e combustibili nell'attività mineraria.

Gold contribution to GDP increased from 0.1% to 4% ($4.5 billion) following AMO's creation.

Il contributo dell'oro al PIL è aumentato dallo 0.1% al 4% (4,5 miliardi di dollari) dopo la creazione dell'AMO.

Between 70 and 90 percent of gold production leaves the country illegally.

Tra il 70 e il 90 % della produzione di oro lascia il paese illegalmente.

Gold production increased from 40 tons per year in 2016 to over 80 tons currently.

La produzione di oro è aumentata da 40 tonnellate all'anno nel 2016 a oltre 80 tonnellate attualmente.

that, without being a sum of parts between different cultures, knowledge, and cosmovisions, or reduced to a single and homogeneous category, we understand by crossbreed ecosystems.

We've identified sufficient conditions within the Arco Minero del Orinoco[6] zones 1-4 to articulate diverse knowledge and practices. **Specifically, indigenous spatial arrangements like malocas, shabonos, and palafitos[7] foster unified social and material relationships with their environment.** In contrast, mining settlements fragment the habitat into isolated extractive zones – quarries, warehouses, workshops, dormitories – resulting in a predatory impact on the surroundings. Additionally, rural public housing, often aligned with a civilizing vision and mission of modernization[8], has also produced hybridized architectural forms. This hybridization provides a platform for coordinating diverse cultural identities and practices in relation to each cultural dimension present, and could potentially enable a coordination between identities and ways of doing with other entities in the territory — fostering resilient and restorative architectures aligned with a modernizing and civilizing vision.

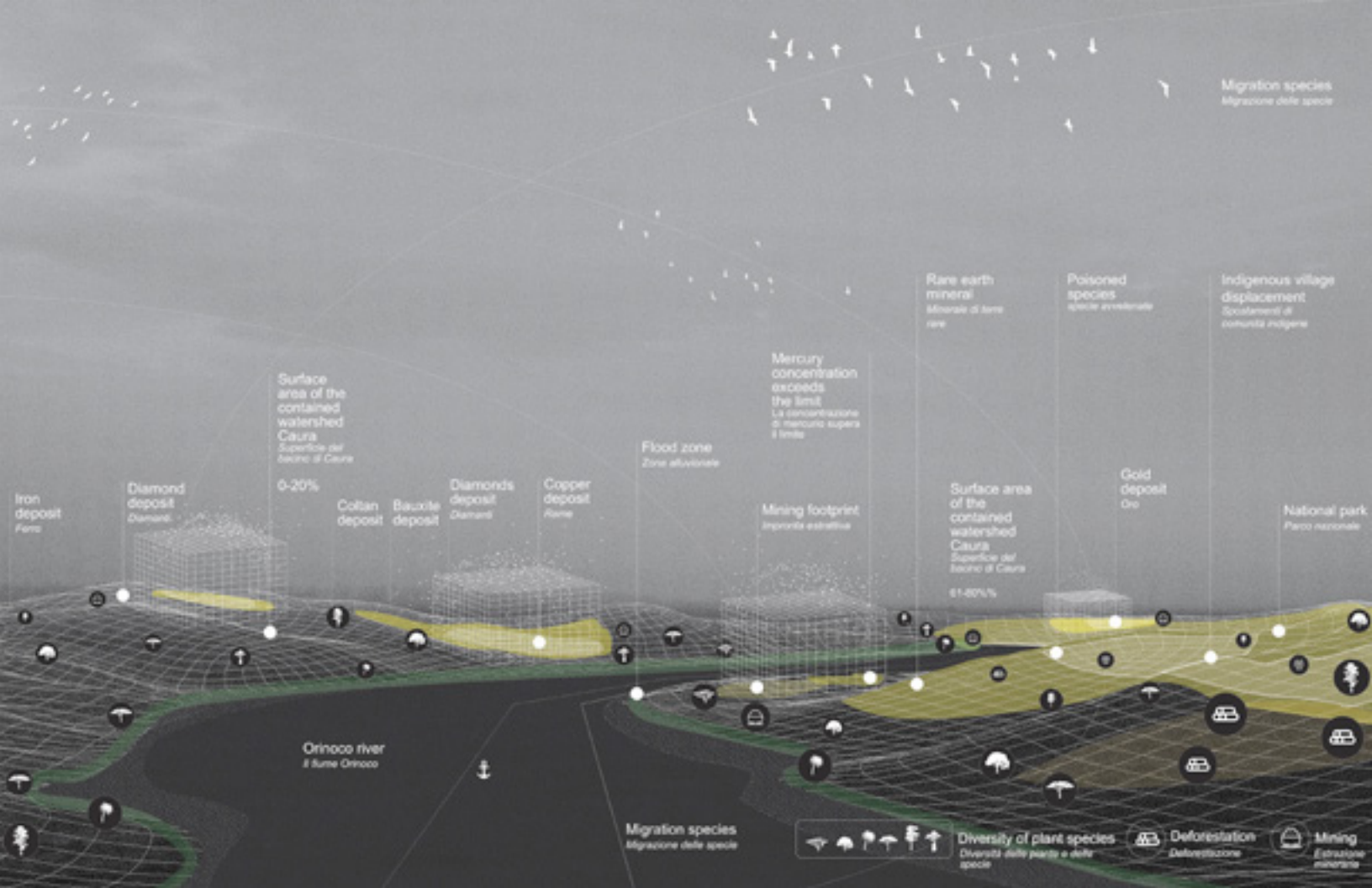
In a necessary post-extractivist transition in the venezuelan Amazon and Orinoquía region will necessitate a reevaluation of human impact. It makes sense to take up again the words of W. Denevan (1992) on the Amazon forest:

> *El impacto humano en el medio ambiente no es simplemente un proceso de cambio o degradación... Los impactos pueden ser constructivos, benignos o degenerativos...pero el cambio es continuo a ritmos variables y en diferentes direcciones" [Human impact on the environment is not simply a process of change or degradation... Impacts can be constructive, benign, or degenerative... but change is continuous at variable rates and in different directions] (p.15).*

6 Translates to Orinoco Mining Arc, a region of venezuelan territory characterized by the intensive exploitation of mineral resources.

7 The three of them are indigenous buildings that display and establish the culture of each ethnic group.

8 For more information, see the article Modernizing the Venezuelan Amazon, by Ricardo Avella, in Amazônía: gta papers 9.


Migration species
Migrazione delle specie
Rare earth mineral
Minerale di terre rare
Poisoned species
specie avvelenate
Indigenous village displacement
Spostamenti di comunità indigene
Mercury concentration exceeds the limit
La concentrazione di mercurio supera il limite
Surface area of the contained watershed Caura
Superficie del bacino di Caura
0-20%
Flood zone
Zone alluvionale
Iron deposit
Ferro
Diamond deposit
Diamanti
Coltan deposit
Bauxite deposit
Diamonds deposit
Diamanti
Copper deposit
Rame
Mining footprint
Impronta estrattiva
Surface area of the contained watershed Caura
Superficie del bacino di Caura
61-80%
Gold deposit
Oro
National park
Parco nazionale
Orinoco river
Il fiume Orinoco
Migration species
Migrazione delle specie
Diversity of plant species
Diversità delle piante e delle specie
Deforestation
Deforestazione
Mining
Estrazione mineraria

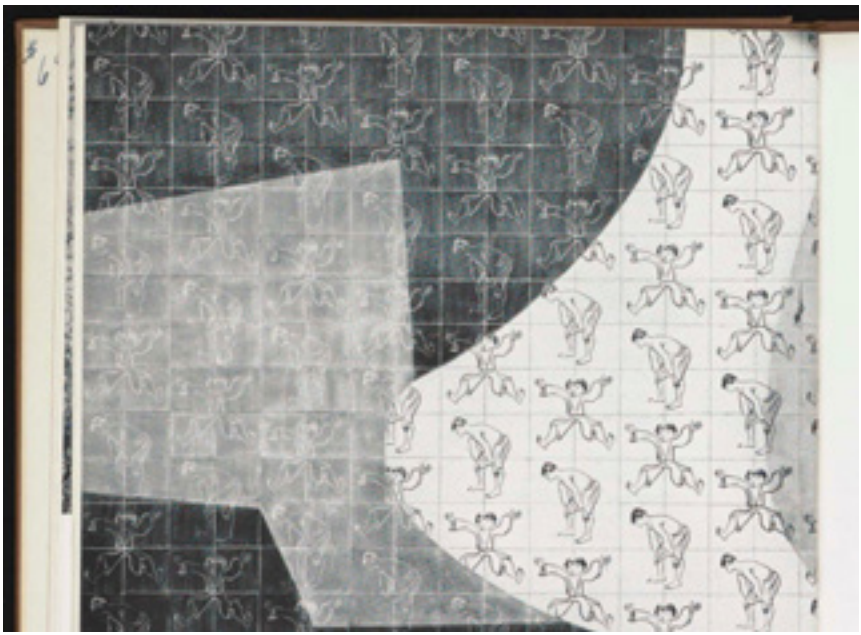
Therefore, we believe that alternative futures exist within the contradictions of our present, on one hand, challenging us to cultivate proactive narratives that, without denying the multiple emergencies of today, emerge from the domain of fear and despair.

On the other, we propose systems of diverse species that move within moving ecologies, which we have called crossbreed ecosystems, healing the territory and joining the communities that defend and prepare worlds to come, producing ecotopias.

On the invention of an origin: A letter from WC1

Words by Richard Gerald-Rondón

Richard Gerald-Rondón is an architect and spatial researcher from Bogotá. His work explores the political and media dimensions of contemporary space, engaging tools like forensics and OSINT to question how environments are seen, built, and contested. He studied at the AA School in London in the History and Critical Thinking program. In 2022, he co-founded LATINAA, a student-led platform that opens critical dialogues around Latin America, advocating for spatial justice, visibility, and intellectual exchange across geographies and disciplines.



The splashes of color trace boundaries that blur rather than divide. We are not a whole, but a tension—mixtures, overlaps, fractured lineages. Diversity is not harmony but friction. Tile mural by Cândido Portinari, Rio de Janeiro, ca. 1948-1955.

This text traces the experience of LATINAA, the first Latin American student-led initiative to emerge from the Architectural Association in London in 2022. Instead of a far-reaching diagnosis of its operations and outputs, **it seeks to return to its seminal ideas in relation to the question of identity itself.**

From the very beginning, I imagined an acephalous entity—in the light of the 1936 magazine that Bataille baptised 'Acéphale', by virtue of a way of thinking without a guiding centre or unifying authority. In the inkwell, LATINAA was conceived as a critical strategy that would allow the practice of a decentred modernity, plural and dissenting from traditional models in architectural thinking. **In practice, it rapidly metamorphosed into a multi-headed animal, much more individualist and rational than the original metaphor of a peripheral collective intervention.** The impact of the geographical shift towards WC1 cannot be ruled out as a justification, in the sense that being contained within such a powerful attractor as the AA, things such as 'one's own agenda'—as opposed to the idea of collective

thought—become a very elusive trait. If I were to describe it more dramatically, a hydra rather than a deliberately decapitated organism would have to be imagined. We are all from somewhere else. Not only does the latency of something like a unifying sentiment of américa pump in the minima, but the agglutination of modernities, symbolic forms and national narratives coalesce into a kind of existential paranoia that very often sought to escape its own histories and bodies.

To act as a standard-bearer for Latin American culture and ways of thinking is to balance between dichotomies and contradictions. Perhaps the most urgent features lie in the confrontation between diversity and resistance. **That is, between the broth of realities that coexist within any social system and, on the other hand, the accumulation of historical debts that each faction, race and community endures with its modernities and political systems.** For the purposes of rationalising these terms within the politics of space, diversity would mean the ability to choose between numerous narratives, geographies and material surplus, along with the names attached to them. Resistance, in turn, would be the attitude with which reality is assumed as untouched by architectural invention to be reintroduced into the discipline. Diversity is about being aware of options, resistance is about being aware of limitations. To give a concrete example, as a Colombian architect I can refer to the

“Diversity is about being aware of options, resistance is about being aware of limitations.”

series of buildings designed by Rogelio Salmona or to his time in Le Corbusier's Rue de Sèvres. I can slip into the history of modernism, distinguishing typologies without much compromise with other less representative styles or chapters of urbanism. I can research vernacular constructions, or competitions, or journals, whatever interests me. This would be to operate with options.

On the other hand, I can circumvent tradition by turning the concept of architecture on its head and compile the records of destruction in mining operations and the slow violence spread by the collusion of the state with international macro-corporations, or map the inter-oceanic routes of narco-submarines and the radar warfare that rages behind a cartography produced by the drug trade, **with the purpose of activating the sensors and images with which we usually work in a more critical way** to bring a sense of justice and accountability. This would be to operate within restraints.

The issue that concerns us as Latin American architects is the position we assume between a proto-hyper-modernist identity that glorifies and mimics the colonial memory and the Western technological apparatus, and, on the other hand, an acephalous emancipatory attitude in which the contemporary condition is becoming increasingly nuclear and irreducible to the architectural space and practice. Taking one position or the other is not a neutral matter, but speaks to the very social, economic and biographical conditions of each of us.

There is now a tendency to talk about diversity as a proxy for pacificacion. As a way of fitting all possible combinations of human traits into a consensus as if all the outcomes can be treated in the same way. There is no denying that miscegenation has resulted in a patchwork quilt difficult to interpret and manage. **But how 'being diverse' challenges us on more complex issues such as anti-racism or anti-ableism,** and on a spatial level, how this presents us with a novel standard for the conception of new and more inclusive architectures or new methods of transcription instead of a catalogue with an aura of exceptionalism. When "diversity" has become an 'empty signifier' with so many semantic leaks and representations, how can we overcome this kind of political disaffection that expresses itself in the form of silence against resistance.

An interesting twist can be drawn from Venturi's analysis of Mies's work in relation to the process of the elimination of constraints. 'Mies builds beautiful buildings only because he ignores many aspects of a building. If he solved more problems, his buildings would be much less powerful'. **Latin Caribbean consciousness and history are so fractured and discontinuous that most symbols and elements of visual culture are too affected to be transformed into architectural objects through a process of imagination and reinterpretation alone.**

Usually we choose to purify reality in order to make it more evocative, out of an impotence to translate more critical concepts into spaces. **In denying these muddled histories, we are missing something that has to do with reinventing our identities and overcoming the fatigue produced by an origin on the margins of the aesthetic regime.** Possibly an essential task is to take sides with this catastrophic whole and manufacture an intellectual agenda in which we can gradually embrace resistance as an increasingly defining feature of our identity without losing the capacity to set the apparatus of cultural production in motion.

As for LATINAA, each new member is a growing head on the animal. Some look towards the horizon, convinced of the supposed security our profession provides, others take on the role of critics, and still others have been cut off to inhabit other destinations and global histories. **Despite the fact that the first coordinates were drawn in response to a neo-conservative architectural culture in our**

"This heterogeneous mass, constructed with quotas of privilege and merit, is a good, albeit partial, definition of the identity shared by Latin American architects."

region, a large part of our practice and action still operates in trivial waters in order to allow us a more nostalgic and individual space in which to make our own voice heard.

This heterogeneous mass, constructed with quotas of privilege and merit, is a good, albeit partial, definition of the identity shared by Latin American architects: one group, faithful to supra-regionalist narratives, and another, smaller group, seeking to revive the long list of lacerated modernities. Finally, there is no more accurate definition of Latin reason outside the region than the one expressed by the following lines, not without saying that the sum of all these affective particles plus the attitude towards those that have been discarded add up to a truly regional consciousness:

I do not love my country.
Its abstract radiance
is beyond my grasp.
But (though it may sound wrong)
I'd give my life
for ten of its places,
certain people,
its harbors, pine forests,
fortresses,
a ruined city,
gray, monstrous,
some figures from its history,
mountains—
and three or four rivers.

—High Treason[1]

No amo mi patria.
Su fulgor abstracto
es inasible.
Pero (aunque suene mal)
daría la vida
por diez lugares suyos,
cierta gente,
puertos, bosques de pinos,
fortalezas,
una ciudad deshecha,
gris, monstruosa,
varias figuras de su historia,
montañas
—y tres o cuatro ríos.

Alta traición, José Emilio Pacheco[1]

1 José Emilio Pacheco, No me preguntes cómo pasa el tiempo: Irás y no volverás (1964-1972), Colección Visor de poesía 757 (Madrid: Visor Libros, 2010).

Materialized Identity

Words by Franco D. Nocioni

Franco Daniel Nocioni is an architect, educator, and researcher from Rosario, Argentina. He teaches at the National University of Rosario and conducts research at the Center for Human Environment Studies. A graduate of Columbia GSAPP, his work explores environmental efficiency and the cultural dimensions of architecture. He moves between practice, teaching, and theory, using design as a tool to engage local contexts and evolving ecologies. He is a licensed architect in Argentina, where he also leads an independent architectural practice.

Photography by Arturo Carrera,
Reinaldo José Laddaga and his daughter,
Marta Maria Laddaga, at their home in
Rosario, Argentina.

Is identity a constant that unfolds regardless of whether we have lost everything, or even when we have it all—surpassing every need and every plenitude?

Architecture has often sought to impose a single way of living upon a diverse world, based on an understanding of the human condition as something that can be generalized—and therefore shaped into a singular mode of life. Le Corbusier, with his Modulor system and Five Points of Architecture, stood as one of the most prominent exponents of this approach.

Even though those principles proposed an industrial logic—and considering the global context in which the urgent need for rapid and economical housing after World War II fostered their development—they missed something essential. **They offered people a place to live, but not to inhabit.** Without identifying with our own refuge, can we truly make a house our home? Identity is so deeply embedded within us that it shapes our materializations without a single word, without the need for conscious thought.

The National University of Tucumán (UNT) was one of the epicenters where the Modern Movement made its first landfall in Argentina. **A group of architects—Eduardo Sacriste, Horacio Caminos, Hilario Zalba, and Jorge Vivanco—were the driving force** behind the creation of the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism in 1945.

Architect Jorge Vivanco, in addition to serving as the Institute's director, is reported to have represented Argentina at the CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture) held in England in 1947. **His connections with Italian architects—Ernesto Rogers, Enrico Tedeschi, Guido Oberti, and others—helped pave the way for their involvement in the School of Architecture at Tucumán** and contributed to forging a bridge that brought Modernist approaches across the Atlantic.

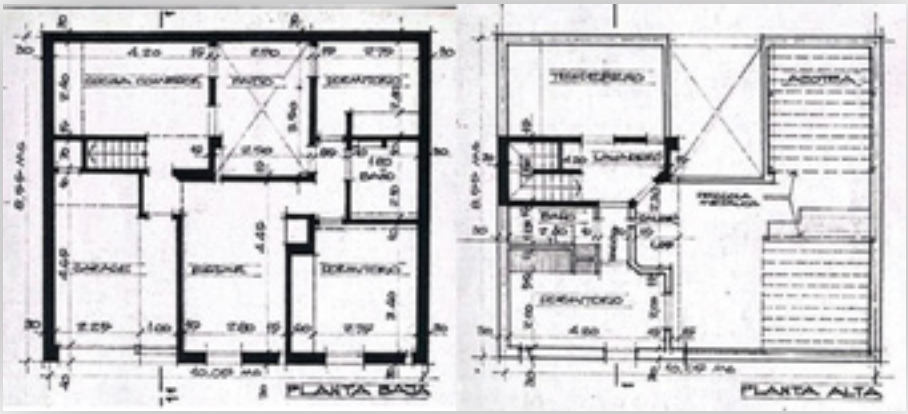
The arrival of the Modern Movement in Argentina translated not only into buildings, but also into new ways of thinking, drawing, and constructing that became visible across broader regions of the country. **Eduardo Sacriste, who had built extensively throughout his career, was closely observed and studied by architect Jorge**

Borgato, a dedicated faculty member at the National University of Rosario (UNR).

As chairman of a department oriented toward technological innovation in materials and infrastructure in the UNR, Jorge Borgato placed early emphasis on what would now be recognized as environmental system efficiency. **His limited number of built works reflected the principles of the Modern Movement, though reinterpreted through a strong contextual lens.** He gathered around him a cohort of students and professors who shared this vision—among them, my grandfather, Reinaldo José Laddaga, who was a member of the faculty.

He was born and raised in Rosario. Son of a musician who taught at the Music School of the National University and of a homemaker who passed away when he was just 11 years old, **he eventually found his path in architecture—after understanding that his future as a soccer player would not allow him,** or his future family, a decent standard of living.

The technical secondary school he attended provided him not only with practical knowledge but also with hands-on experience. **For that reason, once he graduated as an architect from the National**

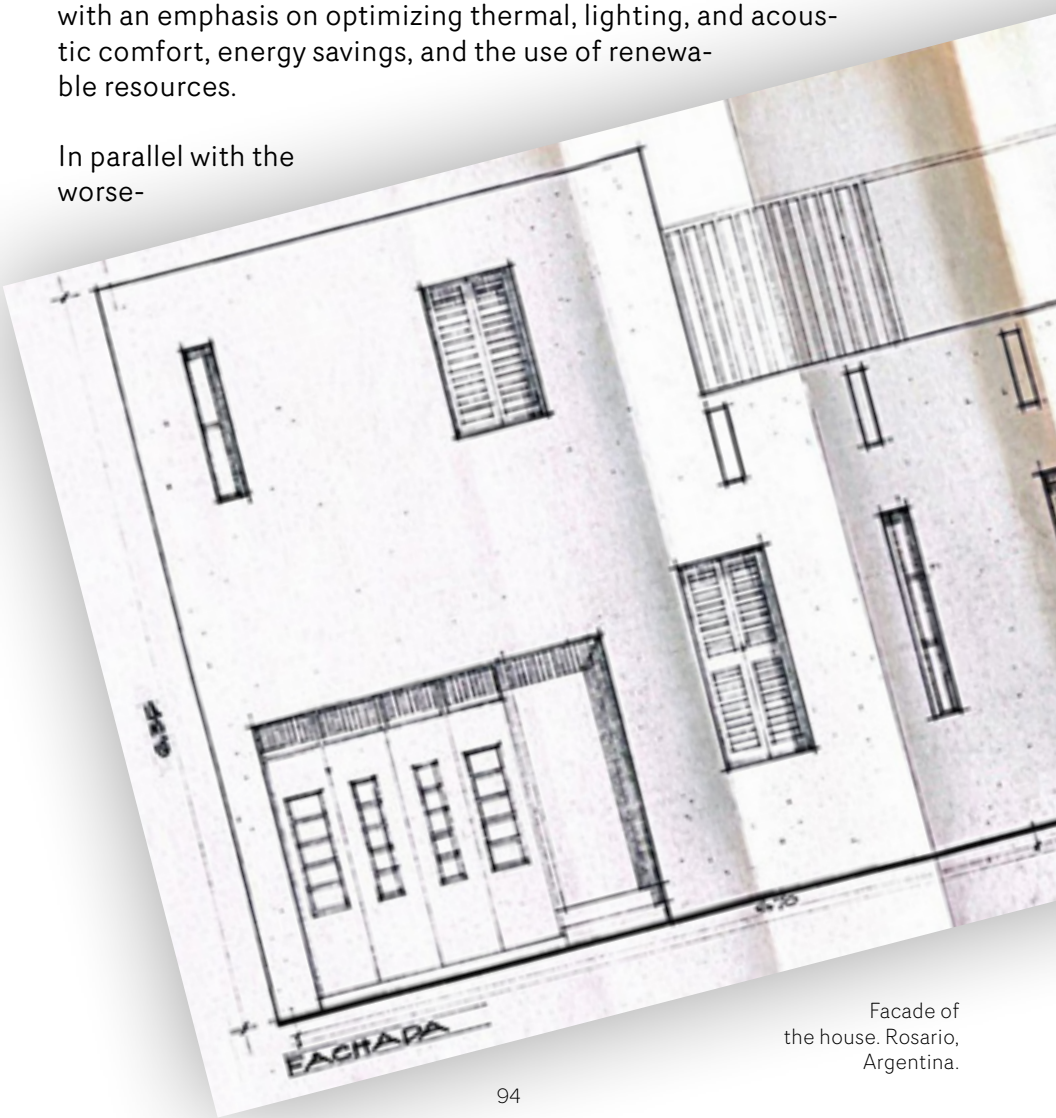


First and second floor plans of the house. Rosario, Argentina.

University of Rosario, he worked not only as a teacher but also as a building inspector—demonstrating his interest in bridging theory and practice.

During his time at the university, one of his closest friends—architect Elio Di Bernardo, a member of the group that had been brought together and deeply admired Jorge Borgato—founded the Centro de Estudios Bioambientales (Center for Bioenvironmental Studies) in 1981. **Until 1991, its members focused on studying issues and proposals related to bioclimatic architectural design,** with an emphasis on optimizing thermal, lighting, and acoustic comfort, energy savings, and the use of renewable resources.

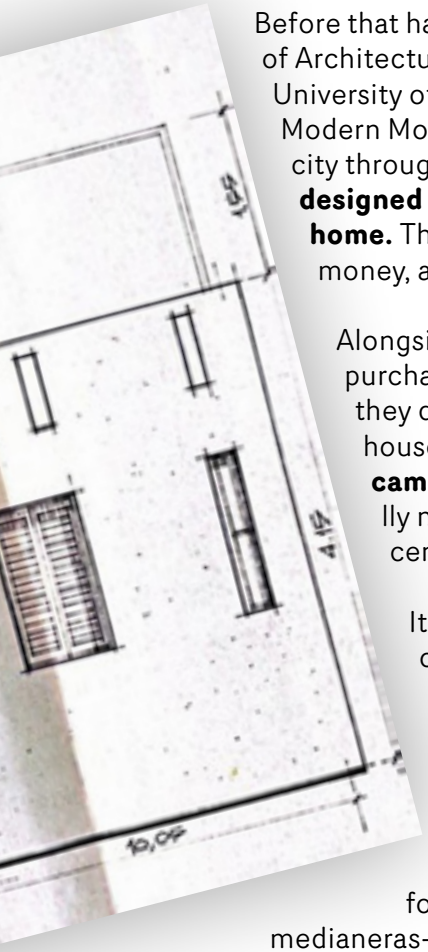
In parallel with the worse-



Facade of the house. Rosario, Argentina.

ning of environmental problems and the need to broaden their perspective, the center changed its name to the Centro de Estudios del Ambiente Humano (Center for Studies of the Human Environment) and diversified its research field to address Urban and Building Environmental Efficiency with a holistic and interdisciplinary approach.

My grandfather was an active participant until 1984, when he suddenly passed away.



Before that happened, while teaching at the School of Architecture, Urbanism and Design at the National University of Rosario—an institution influenced by the Modern Movement that had flowed from Tucumán to its city through those key figures mentioned before—**he designed the house that would become his family's home.** There were two main constraints: a lack of money, and the principles of the Modern Movement.

Alongside his architect friend Nestor Perone, they purchased a 180-square-meter plot of land, which they divided in two so each could build their own house. **The plot is located near La Siberia—the campus of the National University,** colloquially named for its long distance from the city center at the time of its founding.

It was a corner plot, so once divided in two, one house would sit at the corner of the block with two street-facing facades, while the other would have just one. **While my grandfather's friend was more concerned with aesthetics and therefore chose the corner, my grandfather prioritized thermal performance.** He opted for the inner plot, bordered by what we call medianeras—30-centimeter-thick brick walls shared with neighboring buildings. Since the adjacent spaces are typically also inhabited, this configuration minimizes thermal exchange through the envelope.

The initial design, dated 1965, did not take into account a second child—my mother, Marta María Laddaga—and for that reason, the function of the spaces evolved over time. **These changes occurred because there were no economic resources to expand the house without disrupting what mattered most: their identity, embodied in the architecture.**

The dining room was transformed into a bedroom for my uncle, Reinaldo Laddaga, and the garage was repurposed to hold a table where the family could gather and share their meals.

Both on its façade and within its interior—since the furniture was also designed by him—a strong influence of the Modern Movement can be observed. This influence is not only formal but also embedded in the construction process itself. While the house features pure forms and clean white surfaces, it is far from a dwelling built with industrialized techniques. **Much like Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, my grandfather built his house through artisanal means,** using clay bricks and custom-made metal and wood openings to accommodate their varied dimensions.

Contextualization—though not necessarily identity—can be seen in those openings. They no longer consist of fully glazed surfaces, but rather of carefully placed perforations in the masonry, designed to reduce solar gain during Rosario's hot summer months and to prevent passersby from looking into the interior of the spaces.

In a house shaped by limitations, **identity found its way through modest means and small rituals.** Built in the city with scarce resources, it became more than a shelter—it became an expression of how essential, and at times unshakable, identity can be. Every decision, every adaptation, was born not from luxury but from the quiet necessity of preserving that identity.

As it was in the city and built without money, the turtle they had lived stepping over ceramic tiles. As it was in the city and built without money, there was not enough space to accommodate a living room. As it was in the city and built without money, they had a cozy and generous open space where family and friends could gather. **As it was in the city and built without money, they could sit beneath a**

Photography by Arturo Carrera, Terrace of the house — second floor. Traces of a family gathering on the terrace. Ququi, the turtle, playing in the terrace 'garden.' Rosario, Argentina.

blooming Santa Rita, sharing mate and timeless conversations with loved ones.

Even though it was in the city and built without money, neither the urban setting nor the lack of resources could suppress identity's needs. **It found a way to materialize. Identity materialized on the terrace.** That space held—and still holds—elements that give form to something deeply Latin American: the unplanned gathering, without a set beginning or end, shared among family and friends, where the line between one and another begins to blur.

The stackable benches, always waiting in a corner, ready for the loved one who might arrive unannounced—yet always expected. **The grill, generous enough to prepare food for twenty at once,** placed close to the main table so that no one ever strays more than a few steps from the group. That table that was able to welcome anyone who wished to join, built in masonry with the certainty that it would always be needed.

The swings, just a few meters away, so the adult playing with a child could remain part of the conversation. **And the pergola, draped in Santa Rita, offering shade for gathering outdoors**—not only bringing people together beneath its branches, but keeping them woven into the rhythm of the neighborhood around them. Being part of a community means that the community, in turn, becomes part of your home. The boundaries between public, communal, and private begin to blur as neighbors become friends, and friends become family.

In the house my grandfather Reinaldo built for himself and his family, identity still found its way—despite the influence of the Modern Movement, the weight of academic theory on environmental efficiency, and the constraints of limited resources. **It materialized not in opposition to these forces, but through them.**

"Materialized identity" turned what was never fully finished into something entirely whole—a home where architecture made space not just for bodies, but for belonging.

Photography by Arturo Carrera, Terrace of the house — second floor. Swings for the children of the family to play, and the Santa Rita in bloom. Rosario, Argentina.

Technologies of Power, Ecologies of Resistance

Interview by Adriana Castro & Diana Fernandez-Borunda

Marina Otero is a Spanish architect and researcher whose work explores architecture, technology, and social justice. She has curated international exhibitions, led research at Het Nieuwe Instituut, and taught at Columbia and Harvard. Her current focus is on the environmental impact of data infrastructure and digital labor.

Marina Otero Verzier
En las profundidades de la nube
Arquitecturas para el almacenamiento y soberanía de datos en la era de la AI
Ensayos Críticos
03

In the Depths of the Cloud, translated from Spanish. First edition published by Barrett, Spain, 2023.

Adriana: Hi, thank you for meeting with us. We've been studying your work in Chile and we're very interested in its impact in the region. How do you think your Spanish identity has shaped your experience working in the Latin American context? In what ways has it influenced your relationship to place, people, and design?

I have to admit that I feel quite ignorant when it comes to Latin American history, which is especially disappointing given that I am Spanish and we share history, language, cultural ties, and many aspects of identity. Over the last decade, however, I made a commitment to learn more. I've had the opportunity to travel to different Latin American countries, where I've engaged more deeply with the people, culture,

territory and political processes. These experiences have humbled me in many ways.

As Europeans, we sometimes carry a power dynamic when interacting with other parts of the world, and I make a conscious effort to be aware of my positionality as a Spaniard—what that means in light of our history of colonization. I am aware of the history my identity carries when I visit these territories, and I strive to take responsibility for that.

At the same time, I have been deeply moved by the transformations I've witnessed in Latin America, particularly on topics that remain difficult to address in Spain, such as historical memory related to the dictatorship. For example, during my visit to Chile, I toured the Museum of Memory—a place we don't have anything remotely similar to in Spain, a country with one of the highest numbers of mass graves in the world, and an estimated 114,000 individuals forcibly disappeared during the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship.

Quilicura Wetland, Santiago, Chile. Field trip during
Enmeshments): Water, Cables, and Data in
Nicolás Díaz, and M

Adriana: In Latin America, as many of the countries speak the same language and have cultural familiarities because of colonization, it represents a different scenario in regard to other parts of the world.

Yes, it feels familiar, yet there's always an undeniable awareness of the differences. Each Latin American country expresses itself in its own unique way, and while you may feel at home, there's also a sense of disjuncture—a blend of comfort and creative estrangement. It's crucial to embrace these gaps,

to challenge the traditional architectural notions of belonging, and to rethink the idea of homeliness as a static, rooted unity. We belong to multiple spaces, communities, and geographies at once—constantly shifting and expanding our sense of place.

Diana: Before you started working in Latin America, do you think you had more questions about it? Now that you heard more, do you have less?

g the workshop Humedales Enmarañados (Wetland Quilicura, organized by Serena Dambrosio, Marina Otero Verzier.

Having the opportunity to spend extended periods of time there only deepens my curiosity. When I travel to Latin America, I see fragments of myself reflected in the local culture—reshaped in new ways through the circulation of images, ideas, and technologies that open up alternative possibilities. It's both enriching and exhilarating, and it always leaves me with even more questions.

Diana: Working within the Latin American context—particularly in the wetlands of Quilicura—what kinds of questions, challenges, or shifts emerged in your practice? Did the interaction with the landscape, local imaginaries, or communities reshape the way you approached the project?

I've traveled to Chile before as part of a research project on lithium extraction, which focused mainly on Atacama and the struggles surrounding lithium mining and its environmental impact. Later, in the context of my researching data centers, I was most eager to visit Chile again, due to its large concentration of data centers in Latin America.

I learned that local communities were actively challenging policies from major data center corporations like Google and Meta. I found this work incredibly relevant and decided to collaborate with local researchers, including Nicolás Díaz.

Together with Nicolás, we organized lunch meetings with various communities that had been protesting against data centers—groups from Quilicura, Cerrillos, and other organizations. It was an incredible experience. Initially, I just wanted to learn from them, but I wasn't sure what my role in their struggle should be. Although I had plans to travel to other places after Chile, thanks to the support of the Wheelwright Prize, the communities of Quilicura saw potential in our expertise and access to certain institutions.

They asked us to mediate between them, the corporations, and the government—something I had never done before, but I accepted the challenge. I felt honored that they believed I could contribute to their cause. This experience completely changed my life. I began traveling to Chile much more frequently, and my research focus shifted as a result of this new role. I found myself connecting with a wide range of people and delving into the territory, understanding the importance of the wetland ecosystem, and learning about the challenges the communities faced in protecting it.

I met exceptionally talented individuals—mostly young people with incredible energy and optimism, such as my friend Rodrigo Vallejos. He gave me hope that change was possible. Rodrigo and other colleagues were negotiating with some of the largest corporations in the world, like Google, Meta, and Amazon, while representing local communities on the outskirts of Santiago. Their ambitious, yet hopeful, vision for the future inspired me, and I knew I wanted to continue being part of their efforts.

Diana: But it was a long journey,? this took many years?

I've been traveling to Chile since 2018, but my work specifically focused on data centers has been ongoing for almost two and a half years now. It has been an intense experience, as we managed to negotiate and advocate for national legislation. As of December, Chile has a national data center plan, and the communities I've worked with were

Protest sign against extractivism in San Pedro de Atacama, Chile. Photo: Marina Otero

“Initially, I just wanted to learn from them, but I wasn’t sure what my role in their struggle should be.”

part of its definition and will be involved in its implementation. While it's not a perfect piece of legislation, it's definitely more progressive than similar plans elsewhere in the world, and that's largely due to the vision of these communities.
For me, this experience has been eye-opening. I've gained firsthand experience that it is possible to challenge major companies, regardless of their power.

Adriana: How many local communities are affected by this?

I've been primarily working with Resistencia Socioambiental in Quilicura, but there are also other groups like Mosacat, Investiga Colina, Asamblea Las Torres, and Pudahuel Despierta, all of which are addressing the impact of data centers in their respective areas. For example, Mosacat was one of the first to successfully challenge Google by forcing the company to redesign a data center. They proved that the system would consume most of the water from the local aquifer, leaving the surrounding communities without water for their own use, as it would all be diverted to the data center. Their efforts led to the halting of the construction, a significant victory that inspired many people around the world.

In Quilicura, Resistencia Socioambiental wanted to establish a different framework for the development of data centers. Many of these centers are being built in regions that have access to water, but by extracting the water, they are destroying the local ecosystems. While each community has its own unique approach, they share many common goals in their efforts to protect both water resources and the environment.

Diana: So, when it's such a big problem or it's so complex, how do you begin to try and address it? because everything seems so integrated.

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It took us a lot of time to agree on eight key points that we considered the absolute minimum. These points are focused on the use of renewable energy, minimizing the use of fresh water, and ensuring transparency around consumption, as these companies are often very opaque and reluctant to share information. We also discussed the potential

uilicura
etland, Santiago,
nile. Field trip during the Humedales
nmarañados workshop.

Presentation in Quilicura, during the Humedales Enmarañados workshop. The workshop was made possible t
Rodrigo Vallejos), Corporación Ngen (Miguel Mora, Lorena Antiman), and the support of the CCA 2023 Archi
Architecture program at Universidad Católica (MARQ UC), Harvard Wheelwright Prize and Congreso Futuro.

for hybridizing data centers, such as combining them with other urban functions to contribute to the community or provide compensation in some form.

With these basic principles, which we saw as non-negotiable, we approached the government to discuss with the companies. While not all of our points were fully incorporated, they have been considered and are reflected in some form within the plan.

Naturally, some communities disagreed with the plan and chose to discontinue their involvement. However, Resistencia Socioambiental and some of us decided to continue, as we saw this as a current opportunity to negotiate. We were determined to push through to the end, and if we were unsatisfied with the outcome, we could always start a new process.

But for now, we chose to make the most of this space and see where it would lead. Not everyone made the same decision, but I think that's

hanks to the collaboration of Resistencia Socioambiental Quilicura (Alexandra Arancibia, Vicente Bardales, itecture as Public Concern Fellowship, the Future of Artificial Intelligence Research (FAIR), the Master of

perfectly fine—it speaks to the richness and diversity of these communities and their different approaches to engagement.

Adriana: In your work on data centers, you've critically addressed their ecological and territorial impact. From your perspective, how do Latin American landscapes and communities—particularly the ones you encountered in Chile—respond or resist these digital infrastructures differently compared to other regions you've worked in or researched?

I was completely impressed by the ambition of these communities. When they said they wanted to negotiate with Google, I thought, "Really? Is that even possible?" But then I began to realize the context of Chilean society—and, more broadly, many Latin American societies. Specifically in Chile, there has been a long history of community organization, particularly since the Estallido Social (Social Outbreak). During that time, a large part of the population took to the streets, de-

manding better living conditions. It was a very difficult period for the country, but it also led to the emergence of the current government, which came out of the protests. Many ministers and even the president were part of those demonstrations.

This shows that the forms of community organization and collective action in Chile are not arbitrary. They are well orchestrated because people have that knowledge and understand that when you organize, you can achieve change. In many other places I've been, people don't have that feeling. You often feel too small to make a difference. But in Chile, I was struck by the ambition and optimism—the belief that a small community on the outskirts of Santiago can negotiate with Google, and that they can negotiate with the government. That really opened my mind, and I realized that, yes, it's possible.

I think in Spain, we've gone through a similar process, especially with the Indignados movement, which also triggered political shifts—some of its members even entered government. However, in Chile, the outcome was much more significant, as the president himself came directly from the movement. While there is certainly activism in Spain, the Chilean case has stood out as a powerful example that has inspired many around the world, including activists here. People are paying close attention and are genuinely curious about why the Chilean experience seems to have achieved more tangible political transformation, and what lessons can be drawn from it.

I feel there's so much to learn from these perspectives and ways of thinking. The idea that local communities have the power to change things is an important lesson. It's about not feeling like you're always in a position of no agency, and realizing that even in processes with huge economic and social implications, there is something you can do. I think that's the way forward.

Diana: Chile has positioned itself as a key destination for data centers in Latin America, due to its connectivity, natural resources, and state support. Do you think other Latin American territories might soon face similar pressures? And do you see potential in imagining alternative—more just or sustainable—ways of integrating these infrastructures into our geographies and identities?

Absolutely. For instance, Brazil is a major hub for data centers, and Mexico is also growing in this area. Queretaro, for example, is an important data center hub. Unfortunately, the Mexican government hasn't shown the same interest in creating legislation as the Chilean government has. They are pushing forward with the development of AI, but the situation in Queretaro is dire—people there are running out of water because it's being diverted to the data centers.

This is the reality for many people, and it doesn't seem like the government is willing to address it. In fact, I know that the Chilean govern-

"I feel there's so much to learn from these perspectives [...]The idea that local communities have the power to change things is an important lesson [...] there is something you can do. I think that's the way forward."

ment has been in touch with the Mexican counterpart to discuss the issue, but the Mexican government's response has been focused on prioritizing growth. Every country has a different perspective. Mexico, Chile, Brazil, and now Colombia are all pushing for infrastructure development, but the major issue, especially in drought-prone areas, is water.

The problem is that these data centers run 24/7. Even when there's a water shortage, their operations won't stop, which directly affects local communities. This creates a real tension. Our goal is for Chile to serve as a mirror and an inspiration for other countries. It's also true that these corporations are so massive that governments are often afraid to challenge their power, and they fear falling behind in the race for AI development.

We believe that an alliance between governments facing similar challenges, such as water scarcity, could be crucial. We've imagined a coalition of Latin American countries, Mediterranean countries, and those in the Pacific region, coming together to reimagine what infrastructure could look like. This process is already underway, and it will be interesting to see how it evolves.

When it comes to organizing data infrastructure, I see two main strategies. First, recognizing that data is not homogeneous. We have cold data (which is not needed every day), hot data (which is continuously needed), ephemeral data (which exists for a short period of time), and long-term data (both private and public). By differentiating these types of data, we can create different architectures for data centers to better suit the specific needs of each type.

I'm excited about the potential for creating "ecologies of data" that offer new possibilities for what a data center could be. At the same time, I envision a future where data is treated as a common good—shared and not monetized by a few companies reaping huge profits. Thinking through local environments can also help us rethink how to organize these infrastructures. For example, traditional forms of organization that have persisted for centuries, like los ejidos in Mexico or baldios in Spain and Portugal—common lands that are neither public nor private but belong to the community—could inspire new ways of organizing data. In these models, land is worked by the community,

and the benefits are shared, but it cannot be sold or used for profit. Similarly, data could be treated as a shared resource that benefits everyone. People would take care of data storage collectively, with the benefits being redistributed. By looking at these alternative forms of social organization that are deeply rooted in the territory, we can gain insights into how to organize digital infrastructures in the future. To me, the Latin American context could be one of the best places to show that other infrastructures are possible.

Diana: It seems like there just needs to be more awareness, right? What kind of data and what can we do with it?

Exactly.

Adriana: And also how much energy each one requires, others may require less.

I'm not against data centers, and I believe there are different ways of designing them. In some cases, we may indeed need data centers like the ones we have now, especially for certain private data. However, for most of the information we share every day, it is already public. I'm open to exploring other types of architectures and infrastructures, and I think the reason we haven't yet embraced alternatives is because certain companies benefit from accumulating as much data as possible. They use this data to create datasets for training algorithms, AI models, and so on—ultimately monetizing the data.

But I believe we can dream bigger. The people I've met in Latin America who are working on these issues have inspired me to think bigger too.

That's what I aim to do.

That's what I aim to do.

Reflection on El Camino: LatinGSAPP Alumni Journeys

Words by Pablo Useche

Pablo Useche is an architect and urban planner from Bogotá whose work moves across design, research, policy, and visual culture. Grounded in Latin American contexts, he develops community-led, data-informed projects that imagine more just, inclusive urban futures. His practice bridges local knowledge with global conversations, weaving storytelling and spatial strategy to challenge dominant planning models. From public policy to art direction, he approaches the city as a collaborative and contested space—one where design can reflect lived realities and shape transformative possibilities.

El Camino event, spring 2025, LatinGSAPP.

When we move to a different neighborhood, city, country, or continent—or simply when we begin a new journey at a workplace, school, or organization—we carry with us our most important possession: our identity. Sometimes we are unaware of what it is or what it looks like. Sometimes we are reminded of it every single day. **However, no matter the circumstances, it is always there—attached, and open to interpretation, comprehension, validation, or even constant transformation.**

As built environment practitioners, we repeatedly intervene in our surroundings in order to provoke different types of actions and behaviors. Many of these are tied, knowingly or not, to stereotypes, nationalities, age groups, genders, and other social, political, or cultural beliefs. **These actions often say more about ourselves than any words we might offer when asked who we are—or who we think we are.**

Throughout history, we have been determined to classify things: colors, materials, shapes, and spaces. Sometimes we arrange them based on their ties to certain population groups, cultures, or heritage practices. Sometimes we classify them based on their natural

appearance or symbolism. **For instance, the prefabricated hollow blocks used in Arabic architecture are tied to cultural gender roles, yet also serve to cool interior spaces in warm climates.** Wood and filtered light in Japanese bathrooms are design choices that convey serenity and highlight delicate features of sanitation.

Thick layers of stucco, lime, and paint in Caribbean islands act as protection from salinity, while also carrying the colors of diversity and cultural expression. **Mud walls with pigmented earth reflect the physical essence of a place's soil and history.** These are just a few examples in a never-ending list of elements that are connected to practices, sites, people, and identities.

And yet, identifying ourselves can be a challenging task. With the constant expansion of knowledge and the unstoppable effects of globalization, our identities have grown to intertwine with one another. This leads to even tougher questions. **What makes us who we are? Is it our bloodline? Is it the place we were born? Or the place we live now?** Is it the people we relate to, or the ones we avoid? Is it how we see ourselves, or how others see us? These are demanding, critical questions for which quick answers often fall short.

Latinos have been represented in many ways around the world. But something I have noticed across the many nationalities that are grouped under the term "Latinos" is warmth. **The warmth in the way we connect, the ease with which some conversations unfold, the trust we can build with one another,** the reflections on our paths and our challenges, the way we have resisted, proclaimed our needs and aspirations, and denounced injustice.

When I met Ines, Daniela, Gabriel, and Andrea at El Camino, I realized that while they had such different personalities and carved paths, they also shared many similarities. **It was as if their stories had different main characters but followed similar plots—their struggles, their victories, their concerns, and their strong minds.** When we first imagined this event, our goal was simply to invite alumni to share their stories without expectations. But the conversation quickly grew in depth and power. We heard about the struggles of Latina women in fields historically dominated by men. We reflected on what it means to stand out for aspects of your identity you had not

fully noticed before, because of the context in which you grew up. And we heard beautiful thoughts about place, belonging, and transformation.

Most importantly, we heard about different paths to success, and how those paths carry a deep sense of responsibility toward the land of origin and toward their people. **In some cases, that responsibility is expressed through their work. In others, through platforms created to support peers and communities with shared experiences.**

GSAPP offers a space for dialogue across different disciplines and skill sets. **But taking a moment to reflect on the most personal and intimate aspects of our identities can spark conversations** that later translate into architectural, urban, and advocacy projects. Every individual carves their own path as they walk. But there is nothing more powerful than when our paths cross, align, and are transformed by the people we meet and the stories they carry.

Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar… — Machado[1]

1 "Traveler, there is no path; the path is made by walking." — From Proverbios y Cantares, Antonio Machado (1973).

That's it?!

I wish I could stay on this patio forever.

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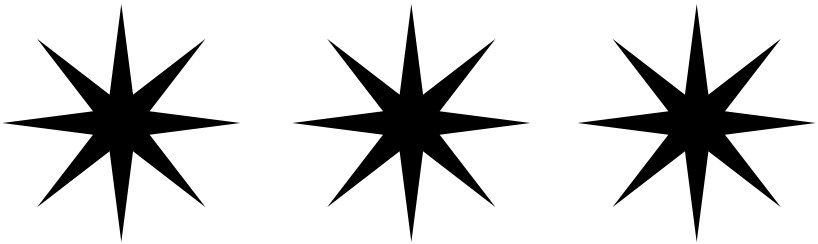

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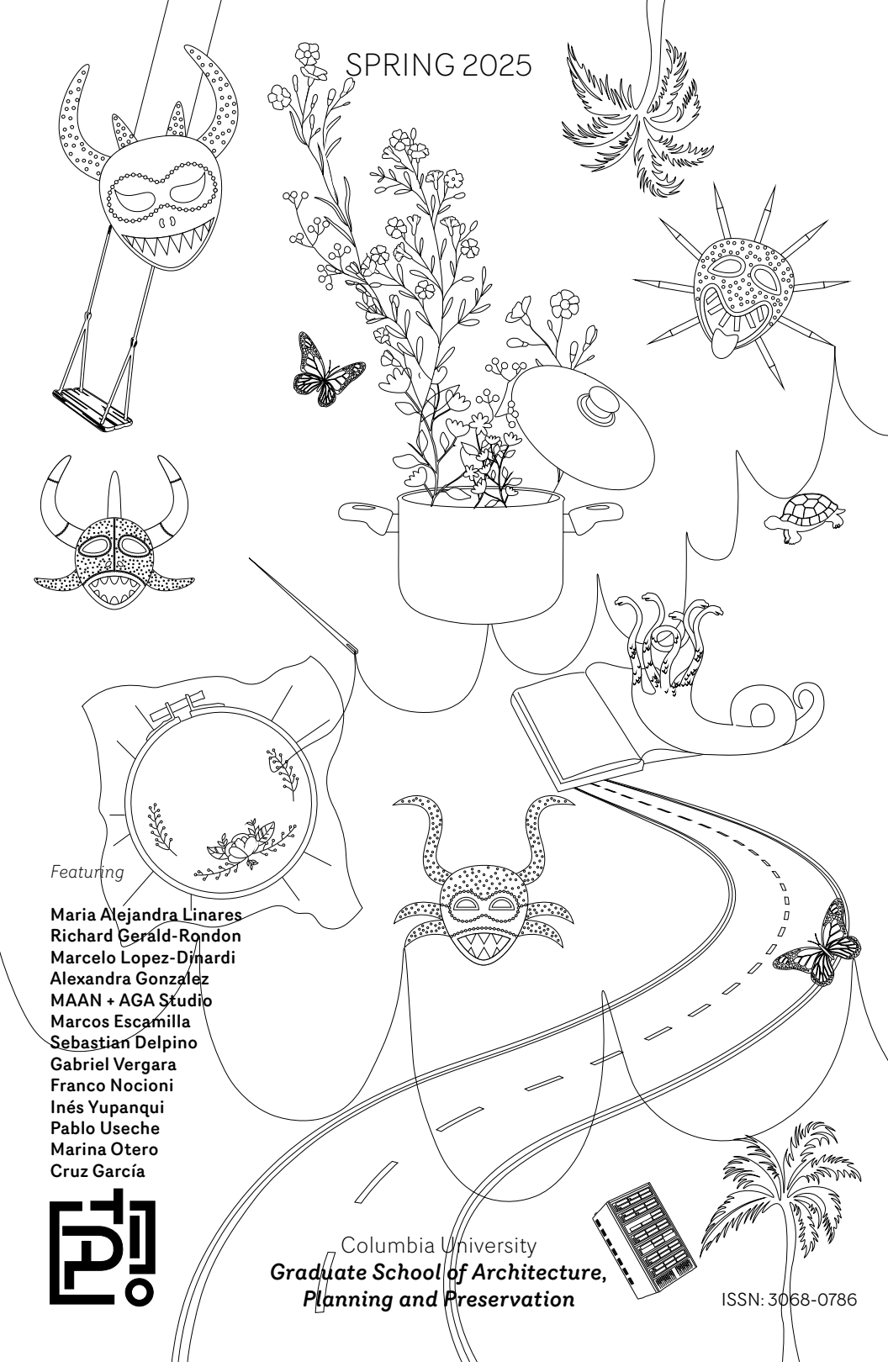

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